

SOUTH AFRICA'S LEADING GAMING, COMPUTER & TECHNOLOGY MAGAZINE

# NAG

PC PLAYSTATION XBOX WII MOBILE

## REVIEWS

CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR //  
GUITAR HERO WORLD TOUR //  
TOMB RAIDER: UNDERWORLD //  
MIDNIGHT CLUB: LOS ANGELES //  
GEARS OF WAR 2 // MIRROR'S EDGE  
FALLOUT 3 // LEFT 4 DEAD

## PREVIEWS

F.E.A.R. 2: PROJECT ORIGIN //  
BIONIC COMMANDO

### WARP SPEED!

INTEL CORE I7 EXTREME 965  
REVIEWED - IT'S THE BOMB!

# PRINCE of PERSIA

HE'S GOT THE MOVES AND THE GIRL... TOO BAD HIS  
TURBAN GOT CAUGHT IN THE PAPER SHREDDER.



### HARDWARE

- TOSHIBA QOSMIO X300
- GIGABYTE EX58-EXTREME
- INTEL X25-M SOLID STATE HARD DRIVE



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VOL 11 ISSUE 10 01.2009 SOUTH AFRICA R39.00



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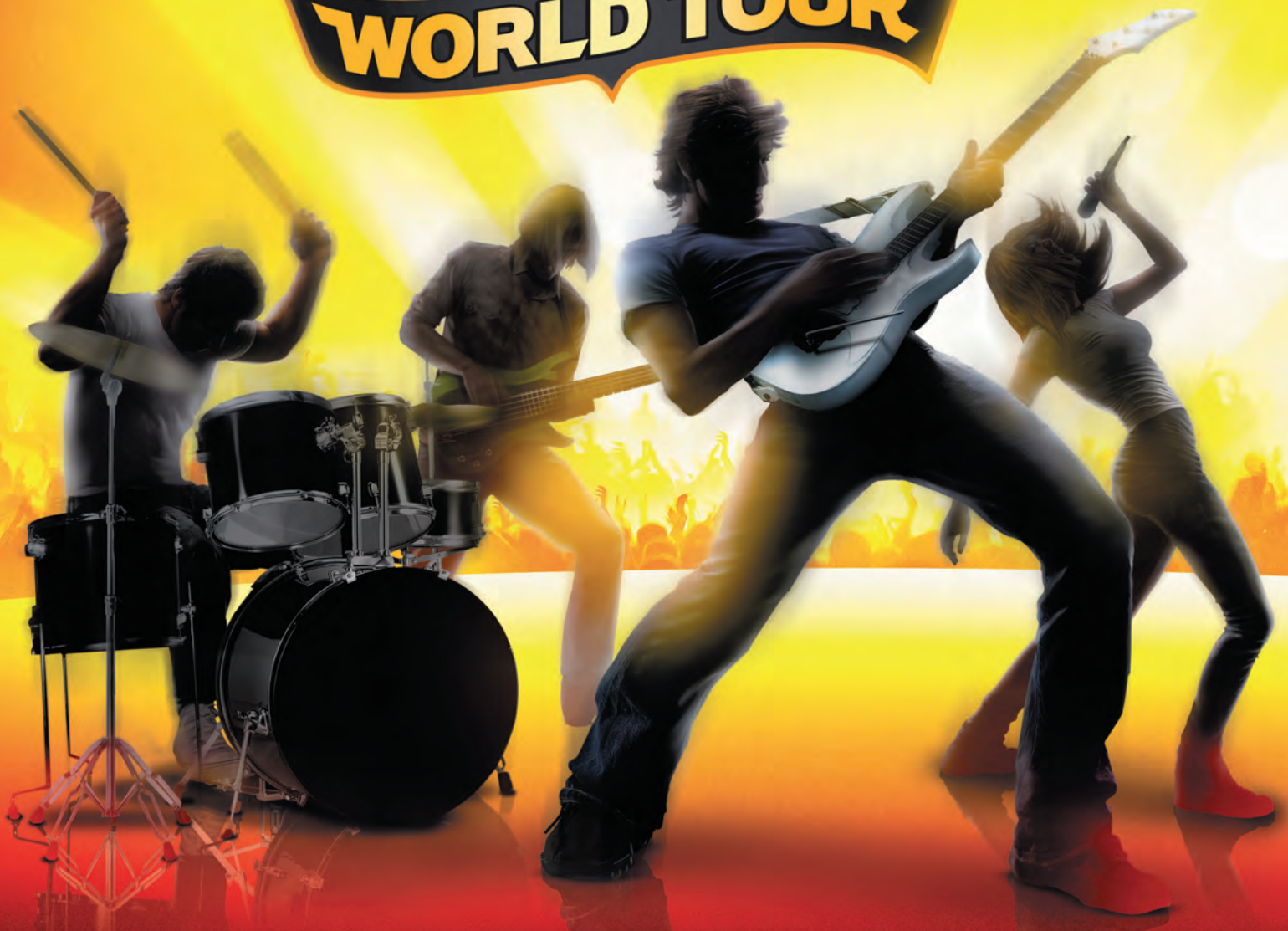
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No DVD? The zombies got it, it looked like brains, and you know how zombies are when it comes to brains... and speaking of brains - next time check that the DVD is in the bag.



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\*Additional faceplates sold separately \*\*Some features may be limited in the Wii™ and PlayStation 2 Guitar Hero World Tour games



PlayStation 2

PLAYSTATION 3



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**HIGH IMPACT DOUBLE TEAM MOVES**



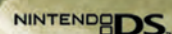
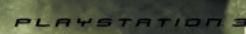
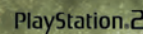
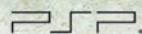
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**NEW INFERNO MATCH**



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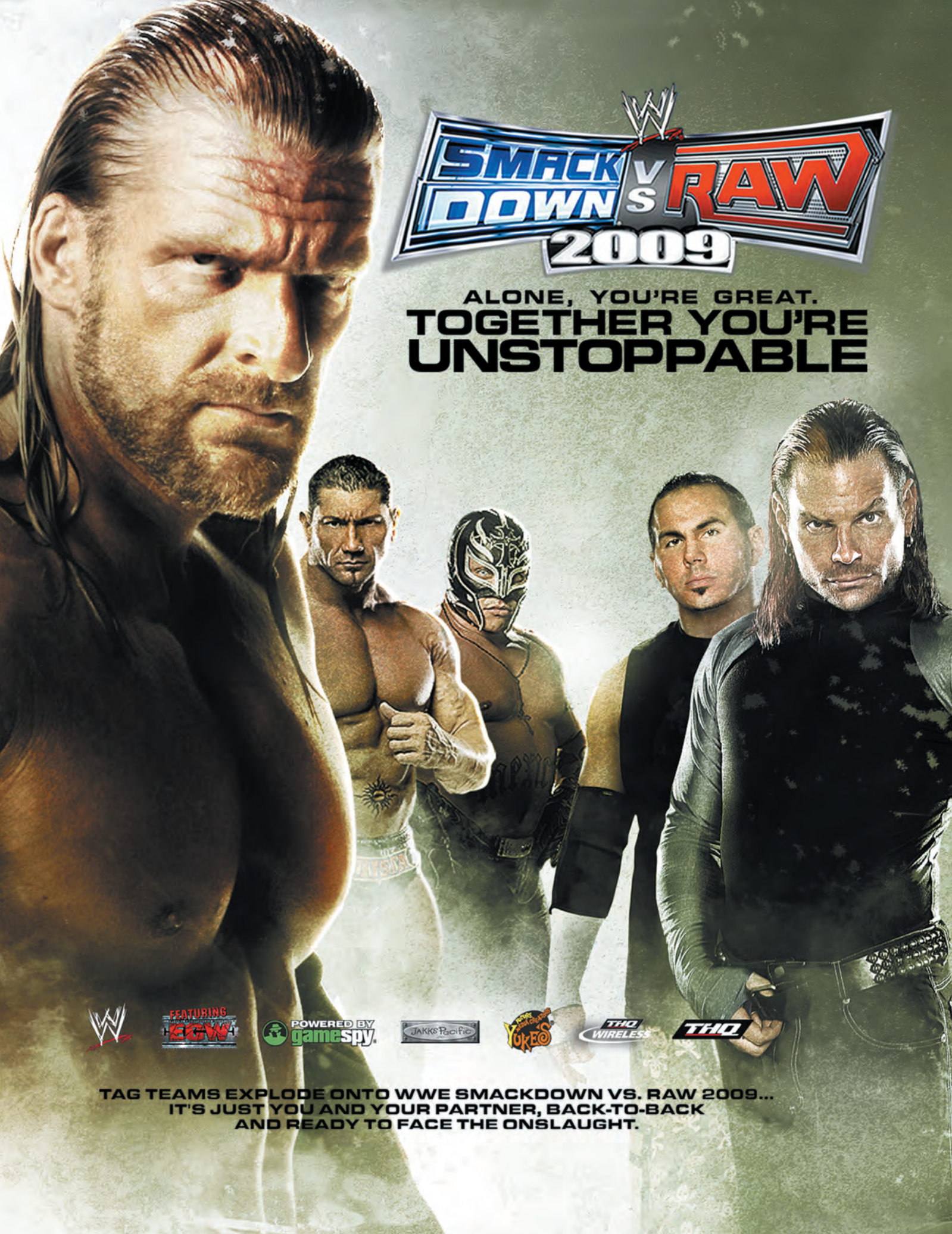
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## ON THE DVD



### DEMOS

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### DRIVERS

ATI Catalyst 8.11 Vista | ATI Catalyst 8.11 XP

### EXTRAS

Firefox 3.0.4 | PS3 Firmware Update v2.52 | PSP Firmware Update v5.01 | OpenOffice.org 3.0.0

### MODIFICATIONS

Fallout 3 Fileplanet Addon Pack v1.5

### PATCHES

Call of Duty: World at War - v1.1 Patch | C&C: Red Alert 3 v1.03 Patch | C&C: Red Alert 3 v1.04 Patch | Crysis Wars Patch 1 | Crysis Wars Patch 2 | Fallout 3 - v1.0.0.15 Patch [English] | Far Cry 2 v1.01 patch | Football Manager 2008 Patch v8.0.2 | Spore Patch v1.03 | S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Clear Sky - v1.5.07 Patch | Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War - Soulstorm to v1.1.0. Patch

### VIDEOS AND TRAILERS

Afro Samurai Beatbox Trailer | Banjo Kazooie XBLA | Batman Arkham Asylum | Castlevania Judgment Launch Trailer | Defense Grid The Awakening Trailer 1 | Demigod Battle Teaser | Demigod Rook | Disciples Renaissance Extended | FIFA 09 Brazil vs. FC Dallas | FIFA 09 Inside the Game [PC] | FIFA 09 Tight Battle | Football Manager 2009 Launch | Halo 3 Keep it Clean Teaser | Kingdom Under Fire II Debut | Left 4 Dead Survivors | LittleBigPlanet Sackboy Documentary 1 | Metal Slug 7 DS | Mirror's Edge Launch | Patapon 2 Japan TV | Prince of Persia Glorious | Prince of Persia Story | Pure - Exhilaration | Puzzlegeddon Debut | Rayman Raving Rabbids TV Party Heroes Spoof | Sacred 2 Blind Guardian | Saints Row 2 Mayhem | Shellshock 2 Blood trails | Skate It Multiplayer | Spyro - Ray of Hope | Still Life 2 Debut | The Last Remnant | The Punisher No Mercy | The Sims 2: Mansion & Garden Stuff Launch | This is a Cry for Help Debut | Tom Clancy's End War Launch | Tomb Raider: Underworld - Diving | Wanted Weapons of Fate | Warhammer 40,000: DoW 2 Aerial Assault | Wipeout HD Final Lap | Wipeout HD Gravity | Xbox 360 NXE Introduction | Xbox 360 NXE Marketplace | Xbox 360 NXE Retail | Star Trek Movie Trailer 2

### RETROSPECTIVES

C&C: Red Alert 3 Command School Episode 10 | Final Fantasy Retrospective Part 8 - 10 | Metal Gear Retrospective Part 3 - 4

### SCREWATTACK.COM VIDEOGAME VAULT

Top 10 Genesis Games | Alien vs. Predator SNES | Burger Time | Demon's Crest | Dick Tracy | Donkey Kong Junior | ECO Fighters | Final Fight 2 | Jungle Strike | Ken Griffey MLB | Kid Icarus | Lion King | Mace | Magician Lord | Mario RPG | Metal Slug | Ready 2 Rumble Boxing | Spawn | Splatterhouse | Virtual Bart



# Do it all this New Year

117321

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# AS I WRITE THIS TEXT...

**T**HERE'S LOTS TO GET through here, so sit back and relax, order that coffee, make sure there's enough toilet paper, light that smoke (not that we condone smoking), prop up your head with another pillow and try not to fall asleep during the following presentation.

## POLICY

Policy in this magazine is to only review finished games (the ones you buy in the shops). There have been exceptions in the past (like the time I flew to London to review *Doom 3*, *Prey* and so on), but these exceptions were played on gold masters, which are copies of the final code, as it will appear in the shops. You see, we always get early 'review' code that arrives at the office ready to 'review' but nine times out of ten these copies are replaced a week or two later by newer versions of the same 'review' code. If this is sounding a little dodgy, you can understand why we wait.

More importantly, you can also rest assured that the NAG reviewers finish games before putting pen to paper (exceptions here include games like sports games and perpetual simulations – games you can never really finish anyway). We also spend a lot of time playing the multiplayer component to get a feel for the whole package. Why should you care? Well, in the past (and present it seems) many international Websites and magazines have reviewed preview code, and unfinished games, resulting in them giving their readers false information and in some cases factually incorrect information. This has mostly stopped due to reader pressure. But, I've also noticed this happening here in our country, as other media (you know who you are) desperately try to get reviews out first. We honestly try not to laugh too hard at their mistakes and thumb suck summaries of games. So, the message here is to those other publications. Do your readers a favour and give them the right information. We're never going to be taken seriously as a gaming nation if the voices of the industry are taking shortcuts and doing the wrong thing. Bad children, bad!

## SURVEY

We have a survey in this issue with some amazing prizes. Please do take the time (you're on holiday after all) to complete it carefully and mail it back to us. Your voice shall be heard and we will steer the good ship, NAG, in whatever direction you tell us to – unless what you want doesn't fit in with what we want. :) We only do this every three odd years, so if you don't vote, you're going to be stuck with what everyone else wants for a long time. Do it now!

## GOODBYE LEN, DON'T LET THE DOOR...

Have you completed the survey yet? As I write this the morning after the night before, my pillow lies soaked and alone on my mattress. Through my puffy red eyes I try to type this paragraph. There's a box of Kleenex next to me; I've gone through at least half of it. The pain is almost too much to bear – Len is leaving us... For Ireland?! This was his last issue as Sale Manager for NAG, poker buddy and general all-round nice guy. While some of the staff brought Champagne and party hats to the office, others shed a quiet tear. Cheers Len, it was great knowing you and even though you'll still be here in spirit (on your 20MBps Internet connection), you're sparkling personality and flashy smile will be missed. Good luck over there, and may we see you again very soon.

## COVER STORY

Survey... is it done? Come on man, it's not that much work... :) As you can feel, this issue of NAG is a little lighter than our usual buff standard. It's January and nobody seems to care anymore.

Our staff, and some of our advertisers think we don't even print a January issue, even though it's one of our biggest selling issues of the year. But back to the cover – *Prince of Persia* is one of those classic games from long ago that has successfully made the transition to the modern era. It's on the cover this issue because we like Elika (the 'love interest' in the game). We tried to get an Elika image on the cover, but apparently she is a little shy. We received about six pieces of artwork to choose from, but we all liked the swirly turban one. End of story.

## WRESTLING COMPETITION

Take note. I'm only talking about this here because I've been to WrestleMania (when it was in Detroit) and it's an experience not to be missed. The good people over at Ster-Kinekor have organised a trip to WrestleMania XXV. To enter the competition, buy a copy of the game and complete the competition entry form. If you're a fan, make sure you don't miss this opportunity!

Before I go and enjoy a long holiday (yes, we do this issue during December) I'd just like to say thanks for supporting the magazine. This year we broke our highest sales record twice (July and then the October issues). This is good for you because we're the biggest and best and get all the good stuff first.

Later people and Happy New Year (if your religion applies)

Michael James  
Editor



I don't usually punt games in this part of the magazine, but man all mighty the Nazi Zombie co-op mode in *Call of Duty: World at War* is awesomely epic like nothing else I've played in a long time. After playing for about two weeks, a ragtag NAG team of four players made it to level 22. Here's a Google Talk quote from Dane after we all went down to the zombie horde. Look for a strategy guide in the next issue.

**Dane:** Yeah, but they get a bit much upstairs. Eventually I literally had to hang back and watch them funnel down towards you guys. Knew that that was when shit was going to break... I heard the screams, but I couldn't do anything to help!



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# NAG

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The NAG staff survived 22 rounds of Nazi Zombies!





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It's always

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Fan Duct



Radiator  
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Fans	12cm silent x 2

## 1020

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Dimensions	185 x 410 x 480 mm (W x H x D)
Colors	Silver / Metallic gray / Black
Side panel	Intel CAG 1.1 fan duct
Material	Aluminum + SECC
Drive bays	5.25" x 4, 3.5" x 1 (External) 3.5" x 5 (Internal)
Form factor	ATX / Micro ATX
I/O ports	USB x 2, 1394 x 1, HD+AC'97 x 1
Fans	12cm silent x 2



## LETTER OF THE MOMENT

**FROM:** Galthour**SUBJECT:** NAG is going soft...

**"I JUST WANT TO SAY** that NAG rules! But for some while now I have noticed something strange. You see the reviews are usually the 5th place I go to when I get NAG, but lately when I see what other websites and magazines rate the game, I noticed that for most (if not all) games they give a lower rating than NAG. So all I want to know is why? Is it because the other magazines are just harsh or is it because NAG is soft? (No offence)."

*Don't worry, you can't offend us. I don't think we're soft or going soft. The problem is that most Websites and magazines have a hardened team of gaming journalists who've seen it all, done it all and have all the promotional T-shirts (also known as the jolly green-haired giants). Most of them are washed up, typed out hacks who fail to*

*see any good in the world of gaming anymore. This usually happens when you don't have to pay for games and play and see everything that is released. In fact, they're actually a lot like pirates. When was the last time you heard a pirate say anything good about a game? They're always negative and nothing impresses them. At NAG, we keep the perspective fresh, we get excited about new games and it takes a lot for a game to get a terrible score. I'd personally much rather have it this way. There's enough negativity in the world already. Why bring that unhappy face and baggage to something that's supposed to be entertaining? This is also why I don't read newspapers: everything in there is sensationalism, centred on people dying, terrorists attacking and political corruption. This is what feeds the media machine and their morbid readers, and this is something NAG will never be. Ed.*



The 'Letter of the Moment' prize is sponsored by Megarom. The winner receives two games for coming up with the most eclectic chicken scratch.

**IMPORTANT STUFF! PAY ATTENTION!****Land Mail:** P.O. Box 237, Olivedale, 2158**Cyber mail:** letters@tidemedia.co.za

**Important:** Include your details when mailing us, otherwise how will you ever get your prize if you win...

**FROM:** Shaun**SUBJECT:** No Internet

**"I WOULD JUST LIKE TO** point out something that is a rather bleak prospect for gamers in this country. This applies especially to PC Games, but I suppose with the addition of online support for consoles now, it applies to them too: The internet has become almost vital to do anything with new titles that come out. Most, if not all programs that are released now need some kind of Internet connection to work properly. Let me list some examples. One of the most widely used programs in the world at the moment, iTunes, may run without Internet, true, but firstly, any new iPod does not come standard with iTunes included and the program must therefore be downloaded and secondly, any of the help features are not part of the actual program, but are just links to sites. While this is tremendously helpful in finding the exact piece of advice you're looking for when you have the Internet, it's totally useless and very frustrating when you don't. I have Internet access, but only through the computers at university and also through my parents' business computers, which is fine for mailing and Facebook, but when it comes to gaming I'm stuffed. Half Life 2 wasn't even an option for me. After buying last month's NAG and playing the demo for Sacred 2, I was convinced enough to go straight out and buy it and I am certainly not disappointed. While the game does need Internet access for activation, it allows for you to take the codes to another computer with access, get the activation key online and then enter it into your offline PC. This solves an enormous problem and has left me smiling.

What swiftly took that smile away, however, was when I discovered that a lot of the rough edges from the demo were in the game too. It's a stunning game, truly breathtaking, but it has some major flaws which get very irritating. I have since discovered that

Ascaron, the makers of Sacred 2 have released a patch which fixes a lot of these problems. That's all good and well, but when you discover that the patch is 456MB, then problems arise. In the States and the UK, the word 'cap' is something which applies to a garment worn on your head, not your Internet. In South Africa, however, most of us have to fork out a chunk of cash for a measly 1GB cap and can't make these enormous downloads. If gaming continues like this, then fewer and fewer people are going to be able to enjoy games properly. Perhaps you, the wonderful people at NAG will be kind enough to include this patch on the next DVD, or maybe a 500MB download is as economically unviable to you as it is to the rest of us."

*The latest Sacred 2 patch will be on the February DVD (if you can wait that long). There is some light at the end of the tunnel: next year we'll start seeing some major changes to how bandwidth is viewed in South Africa (we've been speaking to Telkom and the other service providers). There's some talk of special gaming Internet accounts, good deals and ways to improve the situation. You see, we gamers tend to use the Internet heavily and only at night while the corporate world sleeps, so the thinking is to open up the taps in the evenings for gamers and then shut them down by around 07:00 in the morning. Hang in there; we shall catch up with the rest of the world eventually. Just FYI, much to the horror of our good sponsors, Imaginet, we (NAG staff members) use about 100GB of bandwidth a month (downloading for the DVD, material for the magazine, online gaming and so on). This has been increasing exponentially every 3-4 months: patches used to be around 40-80MB not too long ago, and now they're way up over 200-600MB each. Even the 8.5GB NAG DVD doesn't have enough space these days. It's all going hairy and scary, I tell you. Ed*

**FROM:** Werner**SUBJECT:** November issue

**"WELL I WON'T START** of my letter complementing (brown-nosing) cause the entire SA gaming community already know that NAG is the number one magazine out there. Down to business, I was really shocked not to see any articles in this issue about rAge 2008. I haven't been to one yet (was planning to go this year had to cancel because of unforeseen circumstances) and was hoping to read more about it in this issue. I'm sure I'm one of many disappointed gamers (readers) that were looking forward to at least one article. Hopefully you will take my advice and publish more about rAge in the future and get more peeps to go and push up the attendance figures. One more question, why don't we see anything about AGASA in the magazine?"

*We didn't do a rAge 2008 article at all. This was because we had to use the space in the magazine for games (at some point), had no time to write it (most likely), or probably forgot to do it. Then it was too late, and now here we sit - no article on rAge 2008 ever. :/ The sad thing is that it was the best rAge we've ever done. The good news: look for the rAge 2008 video on the next DVD. Concerning AGASA, we cancelled our coverage of the local multiplayer scene because it ran out of steam a while ago (nothing really new to talk about). We do still cover LAN events on our calendar in the news section as a peace offering. We included this section in our survey, so if enough people ask for it, we'll bring it back - no problem. So get going, complete that survey and have your say. Ed*

**FROM:** Liam**SUBJECT:** 'My Nerd Side'

**"I AM 15 YEARS OLD** and go to a very sport dominated school. I have played in the 'A' rugby team for the last four years as well as playing top cricket. Some may consider me a 'Jock'. However, under this 'jock' exterior lurks my alter ego, or as I refer to it, "My Nerd Side". In the back of my mind I have always been aware of this part of me, but I have suppressed it. Forcing myself to fulfil this image society and my friend see. Recently I have made the decision to unleash this alter ego. This was provoked by the fact that for the last four months I had not touched my Sports magazines. Instead I had read (cover-to-cover) the last four NAG issues. Now I don't want to dump all my emotional rubbish on you guys [phew, Ed]. All I want to say is, who cares if I want to stay at home some weekends, and play COD4 into the early hours of the morning-who are they to judge. Thanks for your great Magazine each month - you guys rock."

*Good for you! You came out of the gaming closet. In this age of mainstream brand coolness, when it comes to Xbox and PlayStation, I'm amazed that so many people still think gaming is for nerds. Oh well, at least most of us know better by now. Ed.*

**FROM:** Michael**SUBJECT:** My NAG (miss) adventures

**"SO HERE I AM,** my shiny new NAG Magazine in front of me, the sweet sounds of Breaking Benjamin in the background. With an odd grin, I turn the 1st page over. "Look at all these pretty things", I think to myself. I start reading the articles... one by one satisfying the endless gaming [goes on a bit, Ed]. What can I possibly do to get my dorky name on that 'letter of the moment' and claim what is rightfully mine!? Do I rant about the gaming scores? No, that's been done a million times before! Do I ask a stupid question, and try to disguise it with high English? Nope, that also been done. What to do, what to do? It's like I can't turn the page until I can come up with some, quote, "eclectic chicken



## NAG FAN ARTWORK

This is what we received during the month. If you can insert, use or create a piece of gaming artwork incorporating the NAG logo, you might also end up here for your three lines of fame. In no order of importance:



**Jan-Marais Sans:** "I made this picture with 3D Studio Max, I was going for a adventurous look, you know like ruins in the canyons. This is actually a 10 second video (which is too big to mail) where the camera flies through the canyon, dodging boulders and finally zooms up on the NAG logo... For technical information – this scene contains: 466,676 Polygons, 699,811 Triangles, 350,937 vertices"



**Bruce Wolvaardt:** "Thank you for a superb gaming magazine that really focuses on the SA gamer. I would like to submit a piece of art I drew in Maya and Fireworks."



The reader who sends in the best NAG fan art each month will receive a copy of Guinness World Record Gamer's Edition 2008

scratch". After running around on the farm and scratching all types of chickens, I came up with... Nothing! Absolutely squat! Ah, well, on to plan B!"

*I never really know how to answer crazy random rantings like this (do I break it down gently, or just rip it off quick and nasty like a sticky plaster over a fresh wound?). I do know one thing: you're not going to be winning any games in this issue. On the bright side, you have done everyone a great service, and all our other readers should thank you: your letter is an example of how not to write a letter, and how not to win the Letter of the Month award. Ed.*

**FROM:** Aiden

**SUBJECT:** I already know and I still don't care  
**"A**T FIRST I WAS curious but deep inside I knew what was coming, it was disguised with tales of three cave men, heck it even had a picture of a caveman on it. In one collective "WTF" that the whole world must have heard I thought to myself, "here we go, brace yourself, another piracy article". It's like the talk that your parents give you on sex where even though you've heard it a million times they still bring it up and you constantly have to remind them that you already know. The thing that bothered me the most is that this was from Walt Pretorius, the guy that seems the most in touch with everyday life not only with games [What?! Are you sure you're talking about the same Walt Pretorius? Ed]. When I was done reading the article not only was I angry but it also reminded me of what happened 2 years ago. It was my sixteenth birthday and a couple of months before I got

broadband Internet so I was on cloud nine. My brother bought me the Orange box for my birthday and I was extremely happy because I was a huge fan of Valve and all their projects. For the next 2 months I was on gaming heaven, heaven though turned into heartbreak when my PC got infected with a virus and my Steam details went missing. I could never log on again and I feel cheated. Now I hate Steam more than ever, but the point I am trying to get at is that Pirates will always find a way to get past security measures the only people that end up suffering are the very fans that support their favourite developers. It's kind of sad really. Could you guys lay off the piracy stuff for a while?"

No we won't. People who pirate games all the time and don't buy them are lame idiots who don't deserve to be called gamers. They feed off the industry and never put anything back; and then wonder why small game studios keep closing down and the price of games keeps increasing, which they then use to justify what they do. It's a moronic attitude and we can do without them: they're not gamers, they're just criminals... But back to you. Your point (justification to pirate games) on Steam, is a little 'off'. Stop being so dense and simply visit the Steam Website (<http://store.steampowered.com>) and retrieve your account details. All you need to do is give them your e-mail address or username. If you don't have these, there are other ways to get your login details back – they even have a help section on claiming back a hijacked account. All said and done, I still don't see what a lost Steam account has to do with a reason for piracy. **NAG**

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# MORE WASTELAND WONDERLANDS

Fallout 3 To Get DLC in January, February and March

**STEP RIGHT UP, VAULT-DWELLERS** and muties: the first official downloadable content for *Fallout 3* is (almost) here, with more content coming in February and March! Three downloadable content packs are heading towards the Xbox 360 and PC versions of *Fallout 3*, adding new quests, items and, of course, content.

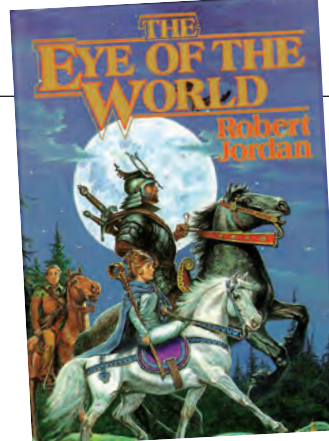
"We've always seen the original world of *Fallout 3* as a foundation for even more content. Some created by us, and a lot more created by users," says Todd Howard, game director for *Fallout 3*, rather obviously. But wait, there's more!

"It's fun to create your own character, but it can be equally fun to create your own adventures. We can't wait to see what the community does with the G.E.C.K.". The G.E.C.K. being the "Garden of Eden Creation Kit" released for PC recently, which gives gamers the tools to expand the game in any way they wish (or are capable of). Xbox 360 users can only look

on in envy at the wave of free content created by fans for the PC version, unfortunately.

At least there's the DLC, right? The three additional packs are "Operation: Anchorage", "The Pitt" and "Broken Steel". Operation: Anchorage lets you enter a military simulation and fight in one of "the greatest battles of the *Fallout* universe", the liberation of Anchorage, Alaska, from its Chinese Communist invaders. That'll be released in January. The Pitt will let you journey to an industrial raider town located in the decaying remains of Pittsburgh, either to take them all out or join up. Coming in February. Broken Steel is a dream come true for Brotherhood of Steel fanboys, letting you sign up with the manly marines and rid the Capital Wasteland of the Enclave remnants once and for all (this will continue the game past the main quest!). Set for release in March.

No pricing has been announced for the DLC just yet.



## AGE TURNS TO LEGEND

The late Robert Jordan's epic fantasy series *The Wheel of Time*, is poised to make its return to a videogame near you, with a couple of films along for the ride. No dates have been confirmed yet, and it's doubtful that filming has even begun, but already cries of concern and joy alike have surfaced all over the Net. Since the novel series is a nearing its 12<sup>th</sup> iteration (written by Brandon Sanderson), it's fair to assume that some condensing of the story will be required to meet the public's attention span, but cutting out important character and world development could cripple the story. After the first game, an action-heavy FPS based on the original Unreal Engine, fell short of impressing many people. We hope that this attempt at bringing *WoT* into our living rooms will be taken a little more seriously.

## MIDWAY GOES FOR A SONG

Floundering development group, Midway Games, has just lost its majority shareholder. Sumner Redstone, who previously owned 87% of the company, has sold his shares for \$100,000 to investor Mark Thomas, who also bagged over \$70 million of Midway's unsecured debt for his troubles, despite the company being valued at around \$30 million. The mysterious investor is yet to release any details about what exactly he plans to do with the company, but after Midway axed five studios and still hasn't revealed their super-secret game to the world, we're not entirely too sure this is such a great financial move.

## THOSE WERE THE DAYS!

For those readers who still cling to their soggy, worn-out copies of *Sacrifice* and *Jagged Alliance* in the hope that one day you'll manage to get them running on your eight-core, 64-bit Vista beast of a machine; it might be time to put down the hard copies and pay [www.gog.com](http://www.gog.com) a visit. Good Old Games, or GOG as they like to call themselves, is a new site specialising in the sale and digital distribution of those classic games that have stood the test of time, and is the creation of Polish publisher CD Projekt. Each game has been carefully handpicked to represent the best of old-school gaming, and GOG ensures us that all titles are fully compatible with Windows XP and Vista. If that's not enough, then perhaps the price

might entice you. Gems like *Fallout 2*, *Evolva* and *MDK* can be had for as little as \$5.99, and many of them boast highly compressed downloadable files to ease the burden of South African bandwidth constraints.

Still not convinced? No problem – every single game is 100% DRM free, meaning you can back up, copy and reinstall them as many times as you'd like, without the need for any launch or download management software. If you long to play those '90s classics again or feel you may have missed out on some truly excellent games that earned their place in history, head on over to the site and poke around their catalogue – you might just find something to keep you going until the next *Call of Duty*.







# HOMEWARD BOUND

Relic "definitely looking" at Homeworld 3

**IT'S ABOUT TIME RELIC** Entertainment let us know what's happening to the "before its time" 3D space real-time strategy series, *Homeworld*. During a recent visit to its Canadian studios in Vancouver, Eurogamer TV quizzed senior team members on the existence of a much-wanted *Homeworld 3*. There was speculation that the THQ-owned Relic was working on a new iteration to the series when the US publisher acquired the franchise rights from Vivendi last year, but nothing substantiated. Until now:

"We're really happy the IP has made its way home, and yeah, we're definitely looking at it. We'll see what happens in the future," said *Dawn of War II* lead designer Jonny Ebbert. When asked if it was one of the studio's current projects, Ebbert coyly admitted: "There's always that chance." When asked if they are excited about showing it to the world, Ebbert chuckled "Yes, very, very!". We like Ebbert.

Eurogamer also tried asking *Company of Heroes: Tales of Valor* designer Chris

Degnan how *Homeworld 3* was looking. "As it always has – behind closed doors. Blacked off. *Homeworld 3*, obviously, I'm not at liberty to tell you anything about. So, good try!"

Next time, Chris. Next time.

There are three announced games in development at Relic: *Dawn of War II*, *Company of Heroes: Tales of Valour*, and *Company of Heroes Online* (co-developed with Shanda for the Asian market). General manager Tarnie Williams said there were "three or four" titles in development at Relic. "It depends on how you count; whether you use the old math or the new math." He wouldn't explain the difference.

It's been so long since the first *Homeworld* was released back in 1999. Its sequel was released in 2003.

Ebbert added: "*Homeworld's* always been dear to our heart; it's what put us on the map, it was our first product, and I think it will always have a special place in our hearts."

## BREAK BONES AND SHAG PROSTITUTES, THIS TIME ON CONSOLE

Popular action RPG *The Witcher* will be making its way onto the PS3 and Xbox 360 sometime next year. Dubbed the "ultimate console RPG" by publisher CD Projekt, *The Witcher: Rise of the White Wolf* will be "completely rebuilt pixel by pixel", feature a new engine and a brand-new combat system. Aiming for a more grown-up RPG, CEO Adam Kicinski claims, "Console gamers don't want to be treated like kids; they're ready for deep story-driven games, and we think we're delivering one of the deepest console RPGs ever with *The Witcher: Rise of the White Wolf*." Apparently he's not too familiar with the *Final Fantasy* series or titles like *Mass Effect*, but we'll let this one slide; there's nothing wrong with another deep, rich RPG for console gamers.



# DVDs for the fans...



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## ODDWORLD MARCHES ON

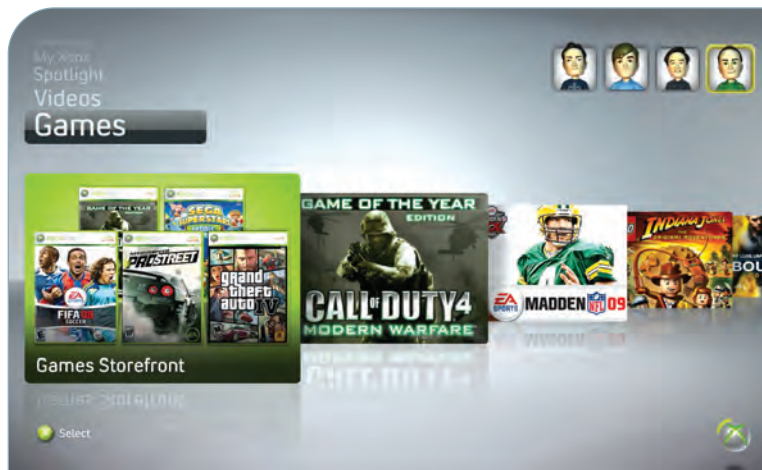
For those of you who woke up this morning and asked yourselves "What the hell happened to the *Oddworld* series?" we've got some good news for you. Not only have they hired a new president, former Brash Entertainment (no, you probably haven't heard of them) chief creative officer Larry Shapiro, but they've confirmed that their upcoming film/game combination *Citizen Siege* is still very much in production despite speculation otherwise. "We intend to break the model of where games are today in a unique and entertaining way," says Shapiro.

MICHAEL PHELPS GETS  
HIS OWN GAME

American Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps, who currently has 14 Olympic gold medals to his name, might be busting into videogame development, if his agent's words are anything to go by. He's reportedly been approached by a number of would-be developers itching to get the athlete's name on their products and has finally settled on one of the mystery suitors. No noob to gaming, Phelps has been performing a few *Guitar Hero* commercials of late, and was even given a pre-release copy of *Call of Duty: World at War* for professing his undying love of *CoD 4*.

## BUY THIS NOW!

If you're in the market for *Left 4 Dead* or even the *Orange Box*, you might be interested in going for the *Valve Complete Pack* instead. The pack contains every Valve title we can think of, including all versions of *Counter-Strike*, *Left 4 Dead*, *Half-Life 1* and *2* as well as expansions, *Portal* and many more. The whole package costs a mere \$99.99, compared to the \$239.81 one could expect to pay if all the products were bought separately. Visit [store.steampowered.com/sub/1134](http://store.steampowered.com/sub/1134) for the full listing and a purchase link. You honestly can't go wrong with this deal.



## NXE

(NEW XBOX EXPERIENCE)

**CAN YOU SMELL THAT?** It's that "fresh new interface" smell, and it's coming from your Xbox 360! To celebrate the three-year birthday of their "Box" (has it been three years already?), Microsoft has released the "New Xbox Experience", or "NXE" for short.

If you have a 360 connected to LIVE, you've no doubt already met the 'Update Available' notification when going online. The download for the NXE is about 70MB and will also appear on future 360 game discs, though which specific ones remains to be seen. Microsoft said they'd release it as a stand-alone download package via the Web, but that hasn't happened yet.

## WHAT IS IT?

It's an entirely new interface for your Xbox 360, changing how information is sorted and adding a bucket load of new features, functions and fun.

## WHAT DOES IT DO?

Very specifically, it replaces the old "blades" interface with a swish, new GUI that resembles the Windows Media Center one. There are new sound effects, and a new pop-up/in-game LIVE Guide that uses a redesigned version of the old blades interface (hitting the Guide button now pops up what looks like a Mobile Phone version of the blades, restructured to give you easier access to functions).

You can now preview themes before setting them, and new Premium Themes do more than just change the background wallpaper. There is now support for 1,440 x 900 and 1,680 x 1,050 native 16:10 resolutions (letter-boxed), if you're using the VGA or HDMI cable.

## WHAT ABOUT LIVE?

Party! The new Xbox LIVE Party group feature lets you and up to seven buddies chat and share images via the Photo Party application. You even get to dress up for the Party with the new fully customisable Avatars (that look suspiciously like the Miis from the Nintendo Wii, just with more polygons and not as customisable). You can take a snapshot of your Avatar to use as your picture avatar, and Avatars will be used in upcoming games. Some current games have been updated to use them already, like *Bomberman Live!* and *Uno*.

You can also now browse the Xbox LIVE Marketplace on a PC (<http://marketplace.xbox.com/>), setting up downloads that will automatically queue when you switch on your 360.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR GAMING?

Tired of spinning that DVD drive? You can install games to your HDD in order to decrease load times and to keep things running more silent (although you still need the game disc in the drive to launch the game from the HDD). It varies from game to game how much of a load-time improvement you get from installing, though we can tell you *Orange Box*, *GTA IV*, *Fable II* and *PGR4* are all a lot faster/smoothen once installed. The installs sit at around 9GB per game, so you may need that new 120GB HDD.

A few additional small tweaks that we love: You can now set the Auto Start to not run a disc the moment the disc tray is closed; you can remove games with 0 gamerscore from your profile "played games" list; and there is a Quick Launch menu for launching a game from right within another game (which quits the game you're playing, obviously).

## THEY SAID IT...

"I probably won't play [*Resident Evil 5*]. I won't like it, because it's not going to be the game I would have made. It'll just cause me stress if I play it."

Shinji Mikami, creator of the original *Resident Evil*

"...most DRM strategies are just dumb. The goal should be to create greater value for customers through service value, not by decreasing the value of a product"

Gabe Newell, Valve co-founder

"There used to be the arcade; you could go up to the nearest machine, put a quarter in and start talking about the new games that were coming out as you play. But that place doesn't exist anymore. If you're a gamer, unless there happens to be an event in your town there is no place to meet like-minded people. Home is that place. It really leapfrogs the offerings on other game consoles."

Jack Buser, director of PlayStation Home

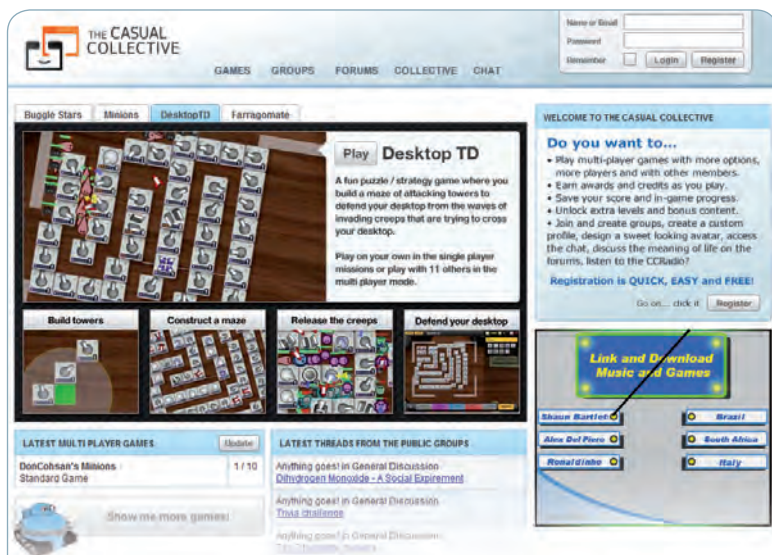
"When you buy a 360 you take it out of the box, switch it on, and it then starts to define your experience. Doing it now, with the new content, is a completely different experience to what it was before with the blades. It's a whole softening of the interface."

Mark Betteridge, studio manager at Rare

"We can sell stuff like double XP for a given amount of time, so your character levels faster; you might want to sort-of catch up on your friends over the weekend, so you can level faster. Those are the kinds of items that we'll charge for real money."

Aleksander Grondal, producer on *Battlefield Heroes*





## BE BORED NO MORE

Desktop Tower Defense creators launch Flash game portal

**P**AUL PREECE AND DAVID Scott have managed to destroy more productive business hours with their Flash games than porn and funny cat images combined. Known for their highly addictive (and blatantly copied from the *Warcraft 3* map "Tower Defense") Flash games *Desktop Tower Defense* and *Flash Element TD*, have revealed their own free-to-play social Web gaming site, which features the latest games from the duo.

Called Casual Collective, the site features an ongoing stream of new, Flash-based games. Launch games include Casual Collective CEO Preece's own *Desktop Tower Defense 1.9*, which now includes multiplayer! Also available: multiplayer head-to-head action with *Minions*, multiplayer fridge-magnet *Farragomate*, and the cute but devilish platformer *Buggle Stars*.

According to Preece, Casual Collective's goal is "to reach an even wider audience with a variety of game genres". Preece believes that Flash gaming could relegate 3D, triple-A titles on an increasingly niche

position in the market.

"As far as distribution is concerned, Flash has everything beat", Preece explains. "When *Desktop Tower Defense* launched it went from, without any advertising, nobody playing it to half a million playing it in a day - in the space of two days. For *Flash Elements* that target was hit in a couple of hours. The way things spread across the Internet is fantastic".

It's also amazing what "free" can do, Preece. Don't get ahead of yourself: after all, when you tried to ask money for the "premium" version of *Desktop Tower Defense*, response was tepid.

Preece believes that 3D has its own problems with trying to hit his target market. "I'm not so certain whether 3D is casual. It adds a whole bunch of camera issues and control issues which require learning and I'm not sure that fits the casual mold."

You can check out Casual Collective at: [www.casualcollective.com](http://www.casualcollective.com)

## MS THROWS IN A LITTLE SOMETHING EXTRA

If you own an Xbox Arcade or Core unit and have a few concerns about installing the New Xbox Experience, you're not alone. It seems Microsoft has secretly been working on solving a few of their storage problems on the slimmed-down platform, as the lack of hard drive or memory card is seen as a major stumbling block for the installation of NXE and possibly future updates as well. Previously, only spotted in the wilds of the Internet, but now confirmed by Microsoft, all Arcade units will begin shipping with 256MB of built-in storage for system updates (and likely a few saved games as well) by the time you read this. It's difficult to say when exactly we can expect these new units to hit our shores, but a few months is probably a safe bet.

## ATARI BREAKS OUT THE DEFIBRILLATOR

Mega publisher and saviour of childhood memories, Atari, has made a few interesting announcements lately, namely in the form of a revival of the *Baldur's Gate* brand. While it's true that the original creators of the excellent D&D-based RPG, *Bioware*, is under the thrall of Atari's arch-nemesis EA, the rate at which Atari has been bringing games like *Ghost Busters* and *Riddick* back to life, not to mention their generally excellent publishing history, gives us hope that they'll sort out something appropriate. We'll have to wait until any solid details are revealed, however, as the company says they've still got their 2009 line-up to sort out before they get too stuck into anything new.

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## SQUARE ENIX MUSCLES IN ON WESTERN DEVELOPERS

In a rather unexpected move, Chris Taylor's Gas Powered Games has teamed up with Japanese mega-publishers Square Enix for the production of *Supreme Commander 2*. This marks the first time Square has partnered with a company outside of Japan, as well as the first RTS to be under its wing. "We see great opportunities in European and North American markets, both of which are expected to be maintaining sustainable growth over these coming years," said Yoichi Wada, president of the US-based Square Enix Co Ltd. As the economic crunch hits publishers and developers all over the world, it's interesting to see how different companies respond to the crisis; Square clearly has its sights set on the future.



## WHO WATCHES THE WATCHMEN VIDEOGAME DEVELOPERS?

Set to coincide with the film release in March 2009, *Watchmen: The End is Nigh* is an action beat-'em-up coming to PC, Xbox 360 and PS3 through download only. Few details have been revealed at this time, but the game is set in 1972 – a good ten years before graphic novel's story takes place. Deadline Games, the creators of *Total Overdose* and *Chili Con Carnage*, is the team responsible for this title. We're really hoping they manage to keep at least a portion of the comic's deep and gritty narrative, but looking at their history, we're not sure that's going to happen.

## PHIL SHENK FORMS NEW STUDIO

With Flagship Studios sinking merrily and its employees scattering for any available employment in the industry, co-founder Phil Sherk has decided to take matters into his own hands. The former Blizzard developer, with *Diablo* and its expansion under his belt, not to mention his position as art director on *Hellgate: London*, has announced Gravity Bear. He's also roped in a former software engineer, Kevin Klemmick, to take up the position of Gravity Bear's technical director.



# MORE COLIN, MORE DIRT

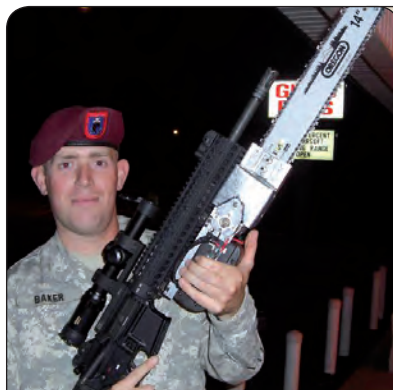
**COLIN MCRAE MAY HAVE** lost his life in a helicopter accident last September, but Codemasters has managed to come to an agreement with the McRae family to continue using the name in tribute – and by tribute, they mean "to sell awesome racing games under the brand the man helped foster". We think that's awesome, especially since the series has taken such a great step forward with *DiRT*.

"He could do things with a car that no one else would and that's where we're taking the series with new events at the extreme edge of rally and autosport. It will be a great tribute to an incredible champion," said Gavin Raeburn, senior producer of the game.

*Colin McRae: DiRT 2* is set to arrive on PC, Xbox 360 and PS3 later in 2009, as well as on Wii, PSP and DS. The beefy platforms will "benefit from the full grunt of the third-generation EGO engine

under the hood", which means better physics, better graphics, more mud, better car damage and perhaps even track-deformation (since Codemasters bought everyone at SEGA Racing Studios along with that awesome SEGA Rally Revo mud-deformation technology). Just FYI, *DiRT* utilised the first-generation EGO Engine, while *GRID* upped the game with its second-generation EGO. The leap from first to second generation was downright tasty, so we're hankering for the third-generation EGO.

The most powerful cars from *DiRT* will be available from the start, Codemasters say, accompanied by wide-ranging event and location types from single-car races in jungles through to multi-vehicle brawls in stadiums. We can also expect the full suite of online options, since that's what all the kids do these days: play online.



## ENOUGH TOYING AROUND

If you've got too much time on your hands, a passion for firepower and an understanding of the inner workings of motorised gardening equipment, you too might have thought about creating a real-life *Gears of War* Lancer, just like a few enterprising young gun enthusiasts from the AR15.com forums. They've created a 100% operational Lancer (or AR15 with a "chainsaw bayonet") that fires live rounds and slices up pumpkins and tree branches like nobody's business, as can be seen in a number of YouTube videos the team posted of themselves clad head-to-toe in flannel and trucker caps. Thanks guys, way to go showing the world we're not all a bunch of axe-murdering maniacs.

## GET OUT YOUR FIGHTIN' STICKS

A recent study conducted by tech company Emsense has unveiled a few interesting revelations about first-person shooters. It turns out that the whole "shooting" part is a little over-rated, and it's in fact the close-combat and melee elements that get players' hearts racing above anything else. Emsense's Tim Hong reveals: "Close combat was the most reliable method of creating engagement, adrenaline, reward, and all the emotions that make shooters so much fun. Certainly, this is nothing new to the genre, but the next-gen games that excelled in this area were exceptionally strong at creating high-paced close combat frequently." This shows that players become more involved in the gameplay when there's a knife-wielding manic in your face as opposed to a Locust throwing bullets at you from the other side of the map – anyone surprised?

Another interesting development from the study shows that the horror classic "rollercoaster" pace of certain FPSs enhances the feeling of engagement. In fact, the down-time between frenzies battles when players get a chance to take a quick break enhances the intensity of the battle ahead, instead of a constant stream of combat.



## THE EVOLUTION OF: WWII FPS Games



Wolfenstein 3D (1992)



Medal of Honor (1999)



Battlefield 1942 (2002)



Call of Duty (2003)



Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault (2004)



Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30 (2005)



Call of Duty: World at War (2008)



## CONSOLE WATCH



**OHIO-BASED MOTIVA HAS SUED** Nintendo for patent infringement, claiming that the **Wiimote** violates a patent filed in 2004 for "technology used to create a 'Human Movement Measurement System', comprising a hand-held tracking device in communication with a base station that can be used to create an interactive gaming experience, among other capabilities." Gotta love vague patents that probably infringe on other patents. Wonder why it took Motiva two years of the Wii being the Best Thing Ever before it noticed the thing "infringes" on their patent. Motiva's counsel have stated, "Using someone else's technology without permission is theft. Nintendo makes videogames where you get to play a thief, but that doesn't give them the right to be one." Is he taking about Wario?

**Sony** has been ordered to pay \$18.5 million to Agere Systems over their patent infringement case that was filed nearly two years ago, regarding the PSP. Sony violated a patent regarding some technology it uses with the PSP and the way the PSP stores pre-recorded music (stuff to do with the format of the file headers).

At least **piracy is decreasing on the PSP**, according to Sony. Hardware marketing executive John Koller notes that PSP users tend to polarise into two distinct sides on the piracy debate. "We've made really no secret [that there] certainly has been some piracy on the PSP," Koller told MTV. "We've seen that as a significant issue — it's trending down right now, we've seen the piracy not be as such prevalent in the last month to two months. But it has been a problem for us."

Sony now also boasts that there are **14 million active PSN accounts** in use globally, up from the 9.8 million it had in July. "With 14 million active accounts and 273 million pieces of content downloaded, we know that you're thirsting for this digital entertainment," said John Koller.

**Red Bull** is the first brand to sign up for dedicated advertising space in Sony's pending online virtual world, Home. The energy-drink superfranchise will have it's own island within Home and feature a racing game based on the real-world Red Bull Air Race. "The game gave us the first opportunity to recreate in the gaming world what we try to do in the real world, which is to facilitate interaction, to give people stories, memories, experiences and a really good opportunity to interact with the brand," offered Red Bull's John Beasley, marketing manager for the company. "It's an easy environment for brands to take that first step into gaming," added Beasley.

According to Macquarie Securities (analysts), **Nintendo nets a profit of \$6 per Wii sold**. Not bad for a console currently the "most searched for product on eBay".

**Grand Theft Auto IV** for the PlayStation 3 shot to the top of the Japanese software sales chart for the week ending November 2, according to data provided by Media Create. One week later, the new Kirby game for the DS took number one away from the gritty tru-life Americana simulator. Japan prefers pink puffballs, it seems.

## PLAYSTATION 3 ACHIEVEMENTS TROPHIES MANDATORY IN 2009

Trophies! They're like... Achievements, but for PlayStation 3! Hey, we love superfluous rewards as much as the next guy, but the Trophies not having been mandatory from the start left some gamers feeling a little frustrated at having to patch older games and then replay them to earn what they should have gotten from the start.

Good news, everyone! Sony Computer Entertainment Europe spokespeople have confirmed that "Yes, from Jan 09 all games must have Trophies."

Huzzah! Now if only they would enforce profile support on all PSN download titles as well. We're looking at you, *Blast Factor*.

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### RICHARD GARRIOTT QUITS NCSoft

Richard Garriott, creator of the *Ultima* series and *Tabula Rasa* has stepped down from his position at NCsoft to pursue other interests. With his past in videogame development very firmly behind him and *Tabula Rasa* all but dead in the water (pending the server shutdown expected in February next year), Garriott is seeking to devote all his time and resources to new interests sparked by his visit to the outer atmosphere.

### 720 STALEFISH LIPSIDE REVERT WITH MCFRIES, PLEASE

Massive Incorporated, the advertising agency behind a large number of in-game advertisements, particularly in EA titles such as *Battlefield* and *Need for Speed*, has just been signed up by Activision for an 18-title, in-game, advertising deal. Some games included in the list are a number of *Tony Hawk* titles, the upcoming *Transformers* game and *AMAX Racing*. Now, as most of you should know, Blizzard forms part of the Activision name these days; but CEO Paul Sams assures us that the lands of Azeroth will remain untainted by the lure of fried chicken and designer footwear. "Our decision to partner with Massive was based on several important factors, including their technical expertise, global sales presence, and willingness to work with us to ensure advertisements appear only in contexts and environments that make sense. This partnership does not include in-game advertising, as Massive understands and respects our stance against advertising that might detract from gameplay or offend our players."

### GARSH!

While many gamers throughout the world are struggling to beat an MMO addiction and others are simply sick to death of the whole concept, companies like Disney are just getting ready to ease themselves into the market. Yep – there's a Disney MMORPG on its way. Entitled *Disney Fantasy Online*, the game will feature questing, trading, levelling up and interacting with your favourite Disney characters. In other words; expect WoW with big floppy Mickey ears and tons of children 'pwning' each other in a sickly-sweet, marshmallow-filled virtual Disney fantasy world. Expect the never-ending fun to kick off around the middle of next year.



## UK MAD ABOUT MADWORLD

### Gamers get hostile with UK watchdog

**D**ON'T MESS WITH THE UK gamers, my china. When John Beyer, director of the media watchdog group mediawatch-UK, told the *Daily Mail* that he hoped the BBFC would refuse SEGA's Wii title *MadWorld* a rating, effectively banning it in the UK, gamers got mad.

"It seems a shame that the game's manufacturer have decided to exclusively release this game on the Wii. I believe it will spoil the family fun image of the Wii," Bayer originally said.

Soon after the statement appeared in the *Daily Mail*, the media watchdog group started complaining in its newsletter about the "rain of hostile e-mails" it started receiving from gamers.

"Within hours of these remarks being published a rain of hostile emails from gamers poured into our office telling us to 'shut the \*\*\*\* up', suggesting that we have 'got our knickers in a twist', demanding, as

though we were on trial for an heinous crime, to know what right we had to impose our 'narrow minded bigotry' on them and stopping them playing an 'adult' game of their choice," he said.

"Others, of a more sober character, asked reasonably why we should be so concerned about games when there was so much violence in films and on television! We were also accused of being 'cowards' for not responding properly to belligerent strictures and one 'emailer' observed glibly that 'violent acts are not a symptom of video games and films, but rather the human condition'."

Bayer went on to criticise articles in games mags, "grossly exaggerating the significance of our comments".

"It is evident from this that the battle for standards has rather shifted away from television towards games and the Internet," he said.

So much heat in the kitchen. Perhaps you should vacate the area?



### BLACK MESA SOURCE

For fans of the original *Half-Life*, you've possibly been following the lengthy development of the *Black Mesa* mod over the years. Designed to recreate the magic and intrigue of the first *Half-Life* game using Valve's ever-versatile Source engine, *Black Mesa* has been in 'on and off' development since 2006. The developers, who have had a few healthy additions to their team in the last few months, have recently distributed a rather stunning trailer to wet our appetites. If Valve's history is anything to go by, the *Black Mesa* team may well be on their way to official employment, as the company was a penchant for hiring the industrious modders behind both *Counter-Strike* and *Portal*. Visit [www.blackmesasource.com](http://www.blackmesasource.com) for more info and a link to the trailer.

### GAMING CHARTS

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LOOK & LISTEN RECOMMENDS...

#### PLAYSTATION 3

- 1 FIFA 09
- 2 Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway
- 3 Pro Evolution Soccer 09
- 4 Guitar Hero World Tour
- 5 BioShock

#### XBOX 360

- 1 Gears of War 2
- 2 Fallout 3
- 3 Fable 2
- 4 FIFA 09
- 5 Call of Duty: World at War

#### PLAYSTATION 2

- 1 Star Wars: The Force Unleashed
- 2 Need for Speed: Undercover
- 3 WWE Smackdown! vs. RAW 09
- 4 FIFA 09
- 5 James Bond: Quantum of Solace

#### PC

- 1 Call of Duty: World at War
- 2 Fallout 3
- 3 Far Cry 2
- 4 Need for Speed: Undercover
- 5 Spore

#### PSP

- 1 Need for Speed: Undercover
- 2 FIFA 09
- 3 Star Wars: The Force Unleashed
- 4 Crash Bandicoot: Mind Over Mutant
- 5 Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood

#### WII

- 1 Wii Music
- 2 Zapper + Links Crossbow
- 3 Super Smash Bros. Brawl
- 4 Boogie Superstar
- 5 Disney: Sing it! Featuring Camp Rock

**GfK** October figures provided by GfK  
[www.gfksa.co.za](http://www.gfksa.co.za)

#### PLAYSTATION 3

- 1 FIFA 09
- 2 Gran Turismo 5 Prologue
- 3 Unreal Tournament III
- 4 Star Wars: The Force Unleashed
- 5 Grand Theft Auto IV

#### XBOX 360

- 1 FIFA 09
- 2 Star Wars: The Force Unleashed
- 3 Far Cry 2
- 4 Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock bundle
- 5 Grand Theft Auto IV

#### PLAYSTATION 2

- 1 FIFA 09
- 2 Ben 10: Protector of the Earth
- 3 Need for Speed: Most Wanted
- 4 WWE Smackdown! vs. RAW 2008
- 5 Need for Speed: Underground Platinum

#### PC

- 1 Far Cry 2
- 2 Spore
- 3 Crysis Warhead
- 4 Need for Speed: Most Wanted
- 5 FIFA 09

#### PSP

- 1 FIFA 2009
- 2 Burnout Legends
- 3 Star Wars: The Force Unleashed
- 4 FIFA 07
- 5 Ben 10: Protector of the Earth

#### WII

- 1 Wii Sports
- 2 Wii Fit
- 3 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09
- 4 Mario Kart
- 5 Wii Play



# HEROES TO ZEROES

Ubisoft admitted that it's no longer publishing the *Heroes* videogame based on the NBC television series. Direct from public relations director Jaime Cottini: "The rights to the *Heroes* videogame have reverted back to NBC Universal. Ubisoft will no longer produce a videogame on the TV series".

The game was officially announced in July 2007, expected to be released in late 2008. Ubisoft's announcement comes on the heels of NBC's firing of the program's executive producers (the guys responsible for most of Season 2 and whatever you may think of it).

It's not clear if the rights were returned due to the show's declining ratings after Season 1, or if Ubisoft was unhappy with the scores on its *Lost* and *CSI*-based games.

We think Season 3 has been awesome, so perhaps there may still come a time when we can finally play as the indestructible cheerleader or the indubitable master of "space'uh ahnd tahm'uh".



## I'M AFRAID YOU'LL HAVE TO PAY FOR THAT

The free ride is over for *Burnout Paradise's* downloadable content. *Big Surf Island*, as its name may imply, is an upcoming add-on pack for the game that gives players tons of new stunt locations from which to hurl their speed machines and the zippy little Dust Devil buggy. Despite the zero cost of Criterion's previous two downloadable content packs for the game, *Big Surf Island* will be a 'premium' offering, although no price has been confirmed yet.

The company is quite happy to defend their decision, which we completely agree with. "We want *Burnout Paradise* players to experience the greatest support ever seen in a console game. We're transforming not just *Burnout Paradise*, but the whole *Burnout* franchise through DLC, and we appreciate the support we know you guys will give us for our paid content. We think it's worth it."

## BLU-RAY PACKS ON A FEW

Chances are that if you own a PS3 or Blu-ray player of any sort, you love flaunting the media's ability to store up to 50GB on a single disc. Let's be honest: the huge storage capacity and versatility of the format have pushed BD beyond most people's expectations; but that's not enough for Pioneer – the brains behind the format. The company has been toying with the idea of squeezing 16 layers onto a single disc, allowing for a ridiculous 400GB of storage. So, what's the big deal? First, Pioneer claim that the disc will be ready for public consumption by 2010. They also claim that all existing Blu-ray players, PS3s included, will support the new format. They even have plans to take the disc to 1TB by 2013. Will we need that much space? Possibly not for conventional means, but the idea of storing movie trilogies, whole seasons of a TV series (or possibly the entire series itself) or even multiple games on a single disc is very appealing.



# EEZY DOES IT... WITH **BULKSMS** THE EASIER WAY!





## SEVEN FINAL FANTASY TITLES COMING NEXT YEAR

Love them or hate them, few can argue the success that the *Final Fantasy* series has earned since its creation for the good old Nintendo Entertainment System. As always, Square Enix is pushing ahead and squeezing every last dime out of both new IPs in the series and rehashings of old ones, and their recently announced 2009 line-up proves that they're just getting warmed up. An astonishing seven new *Final Fantasy* titles are slated for release next year, including the much-anticipated *Final Fantasy XIII* for the PS3 (take note: there was no mention of the Xbox version for 2009), *Dissidia: Final Fantasy* for the PSP and the release of Blu-ray version of *Advent Children* entitled *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children Complete*.



## FTW!!!

## Star Wars: The Force Unleashed Competition Winners

## MAIN PRIZE WINNER:

Christopher Freeman of Fourways

## RUNNERS UP WINNERS:

Christopher Kirkbarde of Rietfontein  
Jacques du Toit of Lynwood  
Jessie Lewis of Albertsville  
Gavin Owen of Winston Ridge

## Red Hot Gaming Rig Competition

## WINNER:

Johan Nienaber of MeyersPark, Pretoria

## JANUARY RELEASES

Subject to change  
Release list and special offers provided by [www.kalahari.net](http://www.kalahari.net)

Date	Game	Platforms
16	Skate 2	PS3, 360
22	Bionic Commando	PS3, 360, PC
22	Destroy All Humans: Path of Fury	PS3
22	Dragonology	PC



## BRACE YOURSELVES FOR DUNGEON KEEPER ONLINE

No, that's not a typo and we haven't lost our minds. The brilliant, Molyneux-crafted *Dungeon Keeper* brand is joining the army of MMOs under its current EA ownership. The catch? We're probably not getting it. The game is being developed by Chinese studio NetDragon WebSoft – fine purveyors of 2D MMORPGs filled with cutesy graphics and oriental origin. We're not sure what to make of this news; while it's cool that the legendary *DK* series is making a comeback, it's entirely possible to lose its uniqueness and appeal if not handled correctly. There's been no mention of genre, other than "MMO", so there's potential here for an MMORTS/management game.

NetDragon chairman, Liu Dejian, is keeping his options open, however. "Capitalising our strength to create a strong gaming experience, powerful operating platform and unmatched expertise within China's online game market, we are confident that *Dungeon Keeper Online* will not only become successful in the Greater China region but also achieve remarkable results overseas." We're hopeful that overseas includes Europe and the US – there's no doubt the demand is there.



## GET YOUR GTA IV DLC HERE

Those of you getting a little bored of *GTA IV* and Roman's nagging phone calls might be pleased to know that the highly anticipated downloadable content has been finalised. Aiming for a February 2009 release, *Lost and Damned* will put the player in control of biker Johnny Klebitz, a member of the Lost biker Gang you may have heard about on the in-game radio. Rockstar VP, Dan Houser, says, "Johnny is a very different character than Niko, with a very different background... I can say that the story will show you a different side of Liberty City." Players can also expect more sandbox activities to keep them busy when they're not popping caps or bustin' faces, as Houser claims "We feel like we've only scratched the surface in terms of the depth and detail". We're holding thumbs for a grocery shopping mini-game.

skate 2  
JOIN THE EVOLUTION





## THIS DAY IN GAMING: JANUARY

1



25

(1955) Iwatani Toru, the creator of *Pac-Man*, is born. Millions of unborn arcade addicts cheer in unison.

2

(1997) Blizzard releases *Diablo* in the US. Millions learn the wonders of creepy sound effects in the distance.



26

(1999) *Castlevania* gets a third dimension in *Castlevania 64*. Look back and think: does anyone actually remember that game?

3

11

19

27

4

12

(1999) Intel announces the Pentium III processor. No one could guess the legacy it will leave behind.

20

(1960) Will Wright enters the world. He goes on to consume the lives and souls of millions of gamers worldwide.

28

(1998) *StarCraft* hits US shelves. Over 9 million gamers spend their money on it for the following 10 years.



21

(1998) *Resident Evil 2* hits the market. It manages to scare the bejeezus out of nearly 5 million gamers.

29

(1996) *Duke 3D* kicks ass and chews bubblegum; and it's all outta gum.



22

(1998) The SEGA Saturn loses its last remaining retailer, marking the end of an era that should never have really happened.

30

(LAN) Frag LAN (Durban)  
[www.langames.co.za](http://www.langames.co.za)

7

15

(2003) *Sim City 4* hits the shelves. It pretty much marks the end of the 'good old' Sim games.

23

31

(1997) Square releases *Final Fantasy VII* for the PlayStation in Japan. Millions of gamers forget they have families.

8

16

24

(LAN) Mayhem January [Boksburg]  
[www.langames.co.za](http://www.langames.co.za)

## CAPTION OF THE MONTH

Every month we'll choose a boring, odd or peculiar screenshot from any random game and write a bad caption for it. Your job is to come up with a better caption. The winner will get a free game from Vivendi Universal Games. Send your captions to [ed@nag.co.za](mailto:ed@nag.co.za) with the subject line [January Caption].



### JANUARY CONTEST

#### NAG'S LAME ATTEMPT:

"Hey, can I get a hand here?"

**vivendi GAMES**



### DECEMBER WINNER

"The loser of the America v. Japan twister game of 1942 never was the same again."

Ben van Zyl

**RULES:** (1) If you don't use the correct subject line, your mail will be automatically filtered by our spam software and deleted. (2) If you think sending in 20 captions for the same screenshot is how you want to play the system, then put them all in the same mail or we'll keep the top one and delete the rest. You probably won't win anyway because you can't follow simple instructions. And people who can't follow simple instructions don't deserve to win things. (3) Obey all posted speed limits. (4) Never run with scissors. (5) There is no spoon. (6) Don't tell me what I can't do!

## BADGER, BADGER, BADGER

Find the Badger! He could be in a screenshot, on a piece of hardware or anywhere, really. Find him and send an e-mail to [ed@nag.co.za](mailto:ed@nag.co.za) with the subject line [January Badger]. We'll announce a random winner next month and that person will win a limited-edition Badger T-shirt from Gamer Gear.



### LAST MONTH'S WINNER

Nathan Cunningham, p59



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## Miktar's Meanderings



by Miktar Dracon

# Legal 2.0

**SO I'M SITTING IN** my neighbour's living room (his house is warmer than ours now that it's starting to snow), trying to find something to care about. It is important to care when you write an opinion column. Can't say exactly why, but I know it is.

There is a convention coming up and for some odd reason my neighbour decided he wanted new feet for one of his fur suits – something about the current feet falling apart. I can personally vouch for how much walking, dancing, trotting and general getting about fur suits get up to. They're very animated... err, animals.

Watching my neighbour get creative with the arts and crafts made me think about *LittleBigPlanet*, which happens to be at the forefront of my mind quite often lately for a variety of good reasons. One, it's a platform game and I love platform games. Precision jumping, swinging and running have always appealed to me. This is probably why *Mirror's Edge* holds such appeal, aside from its aesthetic and 'presence of body'. It's basically a first-person platform game. But I digress.

*LittleBigPlanet* embodies the idea behind "Game 2.0," which Sony touts as being a true evolution in user-created content-driven gameplay. And in a way I have to agree with them. The ease with which people can craft entirely new levels and experiences for other *LittleBigPlanet* players is astounding. On top of that, the fidelity and freedom are equally dumbfounding. Using the simple switches, triggers, springs, coils and motors the game provides you, people have made working calculators, levels that play music, remakes of existing games like *Metal Gear Solid* and *Mario Bros.*... Oh, wait; scratch that last one... it's been deleted. In fact, a lot of good user-created content has been deleted from the *LittleBigPlanet* online universe, with more to follow.

It seems that the moderators in charge of moderating the *LittleBigPlanet* content have been getting a little heavy-handed, removing levels left, right and centre for no real reason other than the levels might, and I reiterate, might, be infringing on someone's copyright, somewhere. One level was deleted because it shared a name with a movie – *Failure to Launch*. The level had nothing to do with the movie whatsoever, but it was deleted anyway. More direct 'copyright-infringers', such as remakes of levels from *Super Mario Bros.* or other popular games, get nuked almost as fast as they are published.

Oddly enough, that one *Metal Gear Solid* level remains untouched.

It's fair to say that when it comes to removing 'copyright-infringers' from *LittleBigPlanet*, not all

copyright was created equal. Intellectual property that belongs to Sony remains untouched (except for that awesome *God of War* level from the Beta of *LittleBigPlanet* – not sure why that was deleted).

All this content culling, however, does highlight a slight problem with "Game 2.0," something that user-created content-driven games have generally been having issues with. *Guitar Hero: World Tour*, for example, is having user-submitted music slashed the moment the first few notes of the Mario theme play. Ever noticed how a lot of people seem obsessed with Mario? Weird!

While games are evolving rapidly into new realms, intellectual property laws are lagging woefully behind. To put it simply, I just don't believe that Media Molecule and Sony should be held accountable for user-created content that recreates, parodies, or imitates other games. So what if someone made a *Mirror's Edge* level – it's not like that's going to stop people from going out and buying the real thing. *LittleBigPlanet*'s content-creation is flexible and fun, sure, but it's not exactly powerful enough to recreate other games in their entirety. You can make a good attempt at it with regards to older, more simple games (like *Mario Bros.*), but the end result remains a clear imitation.

It's understandable that Sony and Media Molecule want to avoid any potential litigious action taken against them for something a user made in the level editor. Perhaps it is too much to hope that game publishers and developers grow up a little and stop protecting their intellectual property like overbearing mothers. It's idealistic to think that maybe, just maybe, companies earning billions off their fat little plumbers would think twice before suing the creators of *LittleBigPlanet* because some dude somewhere recreated World 1-1 using paper craft, stickers and little burlap puppets.

The thing is, other companies aren't really being given the chance to be responsible either, what with Media Molecule removing user-submitted imitations while practically stillborn.

Now it's true that *LittleBigPlanet*'s success (or the success of the Game 2.0 concept) certainly doesn't rely on recreations of popular properties. There is more than enough freedom in the level editor for people to come up with all sorts of fresh, innovative and entirely new content for others to enjoy.

Wouldn't it be nice, though, if the legal glands of corporations would just ease off squirting so much 'subpoena-juice' all over people's creations. What was that about imitation being the sincerest form of flattery? My guess is companies don't want to be flattered – they just want cold, hard cash. **NAG**



It's fair to say that when it comes to removing 'copyright-infringers' from *LittleBigPlanet*, not all copyright was created equal. Intellectual property that belongs to Sony remains untouched (except for that awesome *God of War* level from the Beta of *LittleBigPlanet* – not sure why that was deleted).





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## Dammit



by Megan Hughes

# For Future Reference

**E**VEN THOUGH THE NEW Year is but a pup, and Jack Thompson has been disbarred and embarrassed, you can bet your entire game library that there will be yet another idiot getting in line to attack violence in games. Therefore, let's put the issue to rest now shall we, so that the rest of the year can be focused on more interesting things.

It's important to know that most (if not all) of these idiots base their claims about videogame violence affecting players solely on the research and findings of Effect Theories. Most of these theories stem from the work of behavioural theorists who propose that one 'learns' through a process of observational learning and self-regulation (deciding for oneself whether the behaviour witnessed is something one wants to reproduce). These Effect Theories or Models, however, tend to view the individual as a passive recipient of the messages from various media. It is occasionally noted that users actually choose what media to engage with and that any influence of the media will be downplayed by other important influences, such as parents or peers. These points are not normally focussed on when discussing videogame violence.

Luckily for us, Professor David Gauntlett of Media and Communications at the University of Westminster has strung together a few key criticisms of the effects paradigm, which should effectively shut up aforementioned idiots. For ease of use, when confronted with said idiots, the following is the basics of Gauntlett's criticism of the Effects Theories\*.

### 1. The effects model tackles social problems 'backwards'

Instead of working from the individual and researching what actually affects that person's behaviour, the media effects approach starts with an analysis of the media's portray of social ills (including violence) and attempts to deduce from this what effects the media would have on individuals. Studies that work 'forwards' have shown that young offenders watch less television and had no particular interest in violent programming.

### 2. Children are treated as inadequate

The fact that children are much more media literate than the media effects approach presumes them to be needs to be taken into account when conducting research, which seeks to establish what children understand about and from the mass media.

### 3. Assumptions within the effects model are characterised by barely-concealed conservative ideology

"The condemnation of generalised screen 'violence' by conservative critics, supported by the 'findings' of the effects studies... can often be traced to concerns such as 'disrespect for authority' and 'anti-patriotic sentiments.' Objections are often raised not against those media productions that have the greatest amount of violence

(for example), but against those that take a "more challenging socio-political stance."

### 4. Objects of study are inadequately defined

The definitions of behaviour apparently depicting terms such as "antisocial" or "prosocial" have been taken for granted by effects approach researchers. The terms are often based on ideological value judgements and create poor data within the research. A distinction is not often made between the violence of murder or hitting an inanimate object.

### 5. The effects model is often based on artificial studies

Laboratory studies are less expensive, but ultimately the users are de-contextualised from their natural media use and environment. Results from studies done in the user's natural environment are often vastly different from those in a laboratory study.

### 6. The effects model is often based on studies with misapplied methodology

"Many of the studies which do not rely on an experimental method, and so may evade the flaws mentioned in the previous section, fall down instead by applying a methodological procedure wrongly, or by drawing inappropriate conclusions from particular methods."

### 7. Criticisms of media depictions of violence are highly selective

The effects model seems to only take into account fictitious depictions of violence while completely ignoring violence as portrayed in news broadcasts (for example).

### 8. Assumption of superiority to the masses

Those who participate in the research through the effects model assume superiority to the masses by almost never saying that they or their relations have been affected in the ways they suppose the media affects other people.

### 9. No attempt is made to understand meanings of the media

Messages from any form of media, including videogames, are polysemic (having a number of meanings, interpretations or understandings) in nature. Effect model research ignores this fact and assumes a single interpretation for each message.

### 10. The effects model is not grounded in theory

"The entire argument of the 'effects model' is substantiated with no theoretical reasoning beyond the bald assertions that particular kinds of effects will be produced by the media. The basic question of why the media should induce people to imitate its content has never been adequately tackled, beyond the simple idea that particular actions are 'glamorised.'"

Effectively, any argument based on findings of the Media 'Effects' Model has been discredited. Of course, we all knew it was rubbish ages ago. **NAG**

“ Luckily for us, Professor David Gauntlett of Media and Communications at the University of Westminster has strung together a few key criticisms of the effects paradigm, which should effectively shut up aforementioned idiots.



\* You can find the full discussion of these points at [www.theory.org.uk/david/effects.htm](http://www.theory.org.uk/david/effects.htm)



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by Walt Pretorius

# User-Generated Co [deleted]

**A**T THE TIME OF writing, *LittleBigPlanet* is still hot off the presses. It's slightly cooler than it should be due to some apparently offensive inspirational quotes used in one of the songs, but still, it is burning fingers right now. This all again goes to show (just as *Spore* did) that people like games that allow them the freedom to create their very own penis approximations in a virtual environment.

I know, I know, I had a good laugh at the inexplicably shocked reaction that Electronic Arts had to the first several million 'Penisauruses' created using the creature creator, but I reckon I am due for another one. I don't laugh much. Human nature, though, is an endless source of mirth, and so I eagerly await the complaints that are due to start flooding in at any time from Media Molecule, the makers of *LittleBigPlanet*. Because they're going to be coming, just as sure as the levels based on human genitals are coming for *LBP* – mark my words, your little 'Sackboy' is going to be bouncing off a glistening purple helmet before long. As an aside, wasn't calling the main character "Sackboy" just a little on the naughty side of where they should be. I know he's made of sack cloth, but maybe "Beanbag Boy" would have been a little less suggestive? Okay, granted, maybe I am letting my mind slip a little here, but let's be honest: a massive amount of the population take a mental nose-dive into the gutter when anything remotely sexual is discussed. Some never even surface. It's the way of things.

Why is that, though? Any psychologists who are reading this, please mail me to let me know. I am not saying that I am not guilty of similar behaviour (I didn't just pull that name "Penisaurus" out of fresh air), but I am interested in why people have this obsession with anything remotely sexual. Okay, no I'm not, because the answer is pretty obvious. What does fascinate me is how, time and again, people think better of their fellow man and do things like provide them a perfect platform to create all kinds of possibly mentally scarring imagery (to little kids, of course). Do they honestly think that releasing their game is going to create some kind of epiphany in the general populace? Do they think that people around the world will be watching the introduction video for *LBP* going, "I've changed! No more boobies! No more butt cracks! Just good clean family fun!" Please.

And it isn't going to get any better, boys and girls. The big boss over at Nintendo of America (that's Reggie Fils-Aime, in case you

think I am completely thick) recently said that Nintendo would be concentrating on user-generated content in the future. UGC is the future, in fact, and there's no disputing it. But, the companies relying on this content need to realise that people are, in the end, people. Guys who use their cellphone cameras to take pictures of their erect members to freely distribute via MMS are not going to suddenly stop those kinds of activities because they're holding a Wii remote. In fact, the combination of the two is quite overwhelming.

There is nothing wrong with UGC. There is nothing wrong with having a dirty mind. But the makers of UGC-driven products must be aware that the two are a dangerous combination. If they do that, everyone will be just fine. Now, I need to get back to *LBP* to finish my bouncing nut sack level... [You seem strangely obsessed with sacks and knobs! Ed]



Human nature, though, is an endless source of mirth, and so I eagerly await the complaints that are due to start flooding in at any time from Media Molecule, the makers of *LittleBigPlanet*.





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Give us *Rock Band 2*! Yes, we have *Guitar Hero World Tour* now, but dammit, we want more! We've rocked to all the Tool songs and made fools of ourselves singing *La Bamba* about all we can stand.



Rank	Game
1	Rock Band 2 (Locally)
2	F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin
3	Resident Evil 5
4	Dead Space 2
5	Silent Hill: Homecoming
6	Call of Duty 6: Zombie Holocaust
7	A Notrium-style Fallout 3 mod
8	LocoRoco 2
9	Mass Effect 2
10	A hypothetical Guitar Hero: Def Leppard
11	Dark Horizon
12	World Peace
13	Skate 2
14	Puzzle Quest: Galactrix
15	Diablo 3
16	GTA IV Lost and Damned DLC
17	Street Fighter IV
18	The Sims 3
19	Call of Duty 6: Space Zombies
20	Dungeon Keeper MMO
21	Final Fantasy XIII
22	StarCraft 2
23	Demigod
24	Prey 2
25	Dragon Age: Origins
26	Disciples Renaissance
27	The Conduit
28	Dungeon Keeper 3



## TEKKEN 6

Developer→ Namco Bandai | Publisher→ Namco Bandai | Genre→ Fighter | Release Date→ 2009

**THE FIFTH KING** OF the Iron Fist tournament 'ended' in tumult and confusion, with Zaibatsu Mishima kingpin, Heihachi, vanishing and presumed dead at the hands of his rogue son, Kazuya. Thirty years later, Heihachi's father, Jinpachi Mishima, reappears - his mind now consumed by the Devil Gene. Heihachi's own grandson, Jin Kazama, was crowned the victor after reducing his great-granddaddy to a heap of dust. All of which bodes ill for the family's Christmas lunch, and serves as little more than potent testament to the universal truth of the sage maxim, "An goode brawler doth not neede a storye, for it egregious confuseth the playere."

Never mind the story, then. It doesn't really make much sense, and it's all a bit silly, actually. Who needs a reason to punch stuff in the gob, anyway? This isn't an unabridged exposition of Cartesian dualism - it's Tekken. Ready? Fight! **NAG**

Tarryn van der Byl

### FRESH MEAT

The console port of *Tekken 6* introduces six new characters, 'ratcheting' the total roster up to a respectable 41 combatants.

**Leo:** She's not a guy. She's blonde, she's German, and she's on a mission to avenge her mother's murder.

**Zafina:** Her day job is astrology, but by night, she's an assassin for some mysterious cabal of spiritual warriors.

**Miguel:** He's Spanish, he's all wrapped up in his own self-importance, and he's on a mission to avenge his sister's murder. Miguel and Leo must have loads to talk about between rounds.

**Bob:** Tired of losing to bigger guys, Bob retired briefly from the local brawling scene and spent most of his off time shovelling hamburgers and doughnuts into his face. He has re-emerged grossly corpulent and hungry for blood... and hamburgers and doughnuts.

**Azazel:** He's huge, he's grey, he looks a bit bird-like, and he likes pulling magical boulders out the ground and throwing them at people.

The last one's a secret.

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PS2

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*This Christmas*



## MULTIPLAYER

The first game's multiplayer component proved to be an unexpected success, and it's quite likely that the multiplayer component of *F.E.A.R. 2* will be just as frantic and fun as it was back in 2005 when we first gave slow-motion deathmatch a whirl.

# F.E.A.R. 2: PROJECT ORIGIN

**F.E.A.R. WAS AN INCREDIBLE** game. The atmosphere, the AI, and of course, the creepiness, all moulded together to create one of the most action-packed (and terrifying) FPSs of all time. When Warner Bros. Interactive acquired the developer, Monolith, back in 2004 (before the original title was even released), they retained the rights to all of the game's meaty bits: the characters, the story and basically everything that fleshed out the original title. What they didn't own the rights to was the actual name of the game and everything that gamers had associated with it – those belonged to Sierra, the original game's publishers. The two expansions to *F.E.A.R.* – *Extraction Point* and *Perseus Mandate* – weren't very well received. They looked like *F.E.A.R.* and played like *F.E.A.R.*, but they just didn't feel the same. Monolith was left with no other option than to continue the series with another publisher, and developed the game under a different title

– *Project Origin*. Recently, Monolith and Warner Bros. purchased the rights to use the *F.E.A.R.* moniker once again, and thus, every gamer is now awaiting *F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin*: the true continuation of a series that has been sorely missed since gamers the world over watched the original game's credits roll. The whole thing is incredibly confusing, but that should give you a general idea of the identity crisis that *Project Origin* was originally faced with.

Right, now that we have the history lesson out of the way, let's get down to business. Forget about those *F.E.A.R.* expansion packs, because the new title considers them irrelevant. *F.E.A.R. 2* starts 30 minutes before the first game ended, meaning that you'll get to experience the explosive ending of the first game all over again. This time through the eyes of an entirely new character named Michael Becket (a member of a special forces squad that is in no way affiliated with the





## MECHWARRIOR...

Piloting a mech in the game will provide you with all the armour and firepower that you'd expect. Reports of mechs touting chain guns and rocket launchers are floating around, something which should get fans of big guns and robots all giddy and excited. Some of you may remember a game called *Shogo: Mobile Armour Division*, which was developed by Monolith and was released way back in 1998. The addition of giant armoured walkers to the *F.E.A.R.* series likely pays homage to that game. It's not all fun and games with the mechs though: your movement is severely restricted while piloting the behemoths. The best part of all is that you won't be the only one with a mech – your enemies have a nasty tendency to proposition players to a bit of mech-on-mech, saucy action fun.



Somebody popped that pimple prematurely



That's one way to repaint a room



Lara Croft's twin sister? Separated at birth?

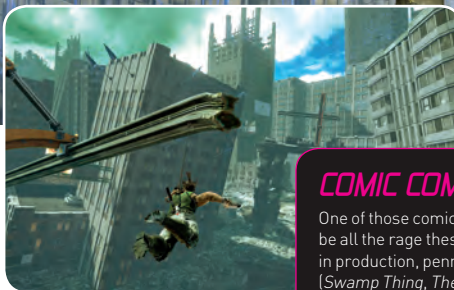
paranormal investigation force that the original game's protagonist was a part of). You may remember that you played as the unnamed 'point man' (who turned out to be Alma's son) in the first game, and we're not completely certain what role (if any) he'll play in *F.E.A.R. 2*. Speaking of Alma, she's back in this second outing, and she's as creepy as ever. She appears in numerous forms: as that creepy little girl that we got so accustomed to seeing (and subsequently running away from) in the original title, and now also as a withered old woman, who the developers have been calling "hag" Alma. The reason for her rapid aging is not clear yet, but we're sure that all will be revealed when the game is finally released. The game is said to be far more action orientated this time around, with the player even piloting giant mechs at certain points. Outdoor environments feature more prominently, and more urban areas should make for a nice change of pace compared to the

original title's claustrophobia-inducing hallways and office environments. The enemy AI has learned a few new tricks as well: enemies will flank and use cover even more effectively than they did in the first title, no mean feat considering that your foes were already outrageously intelligent in the first game. While the clones that you fought in the original are returning in this new title, there are also a few new enemy types coming that are likely to scare the pants off you, considering that all sorts of paranormal stuff is likely to have been unleashed when that nuclear explosion went off at the end of the first game. One of these new enemy types are the "Remnants," folks who were nearby when the nuke went off and are now trapped repeating whatever they were doing just before the explosion. They act as puppet masters and can reanimate nearby corpses and send them after you. Killing these corpses (again) won't help you much, since the Remnant will simply revive them, so

skirmishes with this new enemy type could result in some interesting confrontations as you attempt to 'off' the Remnant while simultaneously dodging his minions. Slow motion is back, although we were under the impression that it was an ability solely possessed by the point man, so we're not sure yet how Michael Becket manages to obtain the ability. *F.E.A.R. 2* is built on the same graphics engine that powered the first game. It's been three years since we last saw this engine, so you may think that it's going to be a bit behind on the times, but don't get despondent just yet. The engine has been almost completely revamped and greatly enhanced, and if the screenshots are anything to go by, the game is sure to be absolutely stunning when we finally get a chance to play the final build. Honestly, who needs pretty lights and cool animations anyway when there are giant mechs to be piloted? **NAG**

Dane Remendes





## COMIC COMMANDO

One of those comic tie-ins that seem to be all the rage these days is currently in production, penned by Andy Diggle (*Swamp Thing*, *The Losers*, *Silent Dragon*), with pretty pictures by Colin Wilson (*Judge Dredd*, *Rogue Trooper*). Every Wednesday, a new preview page is published on the game's Website ([www.bioniccommando.com](http://www.bioniccommando.com)).

# BIONIC COMMANDO

WHEN NATHAN "RAD" SPENCER'S arm was permanently 'retired' by a hand grenade, it looked as though the operative's career at the Tactical Arms and Security Committee was over. As luck would have it, however, the company's paramedics shipped him off to one of their top-secret subterranean R&D laboratories, and glued an experimental bionic prosthetic onto the chunky stump. Obviously, they were having a stock shortage of capacitors or something at the warehouse that afternoon, because instead of giving him something totally awesome and really practical - like a Gatling laser or a Hadron Collider or a cupcake dispenser - the surgeons gave him a grappling hook on a 25m cable. As a sort of conciliatory "Oops, LOL" gesture, perhaps, Spencer was subsequently reassigned to Special Ops, where he spent a lot of time mostly just hanging out<sup>1</sup>.

As luck would have it, however, TASC's star operative, Joseph "Super Joe" Gibson, was abducted and imprisoned shortly thereafter by the Imperialist thug, Generalissimo Killt, and satellite recon showed the holding facility to be some sort of eccentric architectural anomaly that was more or less entirely comprised of concrete tiers with no stairs in between them. Nathan's bionic grapple was swiftly promoted from being an inter-office instant messaging punch line to TASC's hottest property, and he's deployed to recover Gibson and dismantle the enemy's plans to blow up stuff and kill everyone. The mission was a success, and adapted into

a commemorative videogame (*Bionic Commando*, 1988).

Fast forward ten years, and Spencer's on death row for refusing to carry out an order to terminate two rogue bionic prototypes. Apparently having "Saved the world" on your CV isn't admissible evidence in court when you're on trial for treason. All bionics are summarily declared *verboten*, the TASC Spec Ops division collapses, and Spencer mysteriously becomes a brunette. As luck would have it, however, Ascension City is bombed by disgruntled former bionics operatives on the day of his execution, and Spencer is promptly granted a full pardon and released to fix everything (presumably on the recommendation that further attacks of fraternal conscience be duly ignored). Spencer's also probably running short on luck by now, so here's hoping he manages to contrive a happy ending this time around.

Following the recent glossy XBLA and PSN remake of the NES original, *Bionic Commando Rearmed*, GRIN's latest iteration takes the franchise into a bold new 3D arena (which basically pegs it as a *Spider-Man* clone with 8-bit nostalgia slopped all over it). **NAG**

Tarryn van der Byl

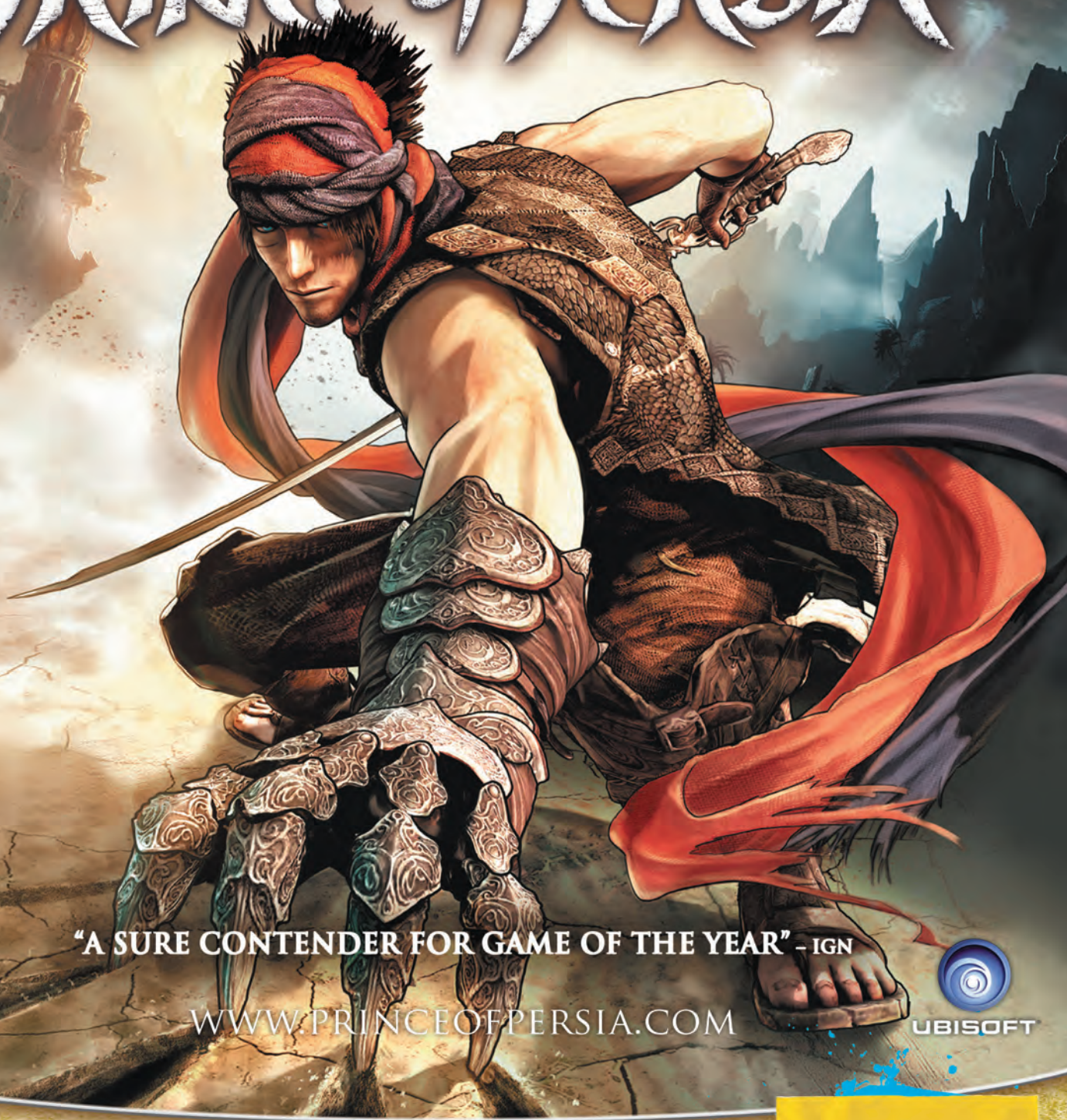
<sup>1</sup> I'm actually paid to write these appalling jokes. Don't I have the best job ever?





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ten thousand years have passed since the  
evil god of shadow, ahriman, was  
imprisoned in the tree of light by his  
shinier counterpart - ormazd,  
the god of light.



Developer → Ubisoft Montreal | Publisher → Ubisoft | Genre → Action/Adventure | Release Date → December 2008

PC  
360  
PS3  
Wii  
PS2  
PSP  
DS  
MOB

NAG

038



# PRINCE of PERSIA



## DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

While many of the Prince's acrobatic feats are largely unchanged from the Sands of Time, he does have a few new tricks up his sleeve, and thanks to the new, streamlined control system (and the Prince's highly-versatile gauntlet) they're all pretty darn easy to perform.

**Wall run:** Wall-running has never been easier! Jump onto a wall, bound along it, leap to an opposite wall and scamper up over a ledge all with just a few button presses. Physics is for losers, anyway.

**I**N 2003, WHEN UBISOFT released The Sands of Time, they took the new series so far away from the original platform game that it was almost unidentifiable as a continuation of the name. In fact, that was about all it continued – combat, exploration, art direction and level design all made a radical departure from their roots – carving out a new home for the brand and marking the beginning of one of the most entertaining and enthralling action-adventure series to hit the market this side of Tomb Raider. Now, five years later, Ubisoft is ready to usher in a new Prince that not only further distances itself from the six games before it with a number of elaborate and sometimes controversial game mechanics, but manages to sneak in a few key elements that remind people exactly where the new series gets its name from.

Ten thousand years have passed since the evil god of shadow, Ahriman, was imprisoned in the Tree of Light by his shinier counterpart – Ormadz, the god of light. The people of the lands have moved on and forgotten the terrible scourge Ahriman let loose upon the world – his corrupting taint that twisted and destroyed the land and its inhabitants alike. The Tree's guardians, an ancient warrior tribe charged with the task of keeping Ormadz shackled up and any dark influences away from the Tree, have failed in their duties – all but wiped out. The god of shadow has once again risen to corrupt the land. Only Elika, the last remaining tribe member and powerful magic-user, can restore the land to its

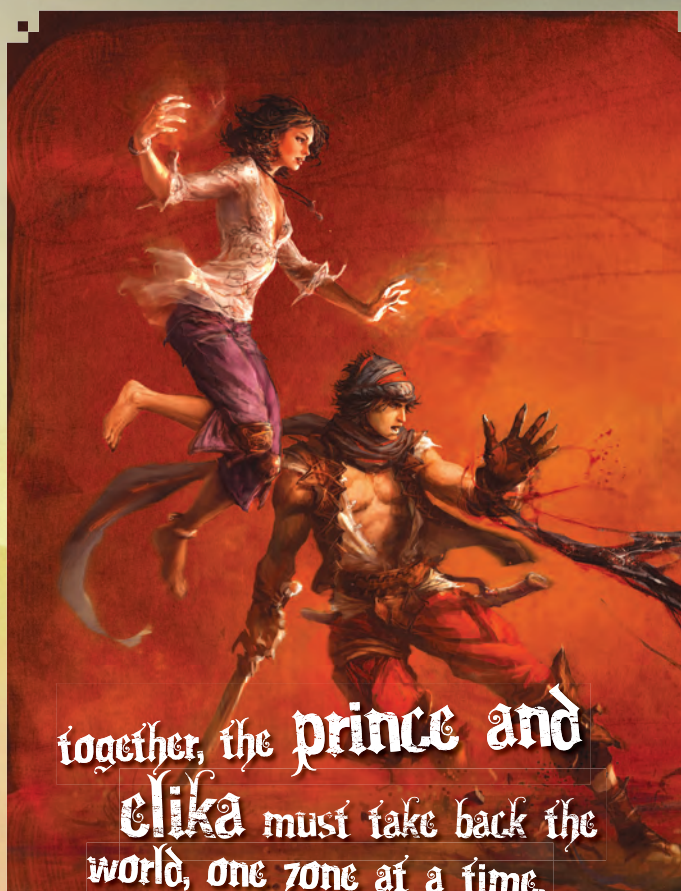
former glory; but she'll need a hand from a wandering treasure hunter and all-round good-for-nothing and his dazzling combat and acrobatic abilities. Together, the Prince and Elika must take back the world, one zone at a time.

## TOUR THE LAND, SEE THE SITES!

When they're not busy slaying Ahriman's hordes or bickering at each other, the Prince and Elika can freely explore the lands in this open-world environment. There are four main areas of the land – The Ruined Citadel, The Vale, The Royal Palace and The City of Light, each accessible from the centralised Temple built around the Tree of Light. As the player progresses through the story and drives back the forces of Corruption from each zone, additional areas are opened up beyond them, creating a multi-tiered open-world system that encourages players to travel through the areas in almost any order they choose. As each area is cleansed of the taint, Light seeds are revealed that Elika and the Prince can collect to improve Elika's powers and unlock new ones.

## IN WITH THE OLD

Where the Sands of Time had the player battling countless hordes of ne'er-do-wells, the new series has shifted the combat from the masses to more traditional, focused, battles. Each encounter with an enemy, no matter whether they're bosses or common mobs, feels like a big deal. It reminds me of combat in the first two Prince of Persia



together, the prince and elika must take back the world, one zone at a time.



the prince has four attacks at his disposal: sword, gauntlet, acrobatic and elika



games, where every battle could be your last if you were not careful. When combat begins, the camera changes from the (already dynamic) over-the-shoulder camera to an arena-styled one, locking the Prince, Elika, and their opponents in deadly combat until a victor emerges.

The camera swoops, dives and swirls around to heighten the sense of danger and marks every battle as an epic one. The Prince has four attacks at his disposal – sword, gauntlet, acrobatic and Elika (each accessible from a face button on the controller), as well as dozens of combinations between. Many enemies evolve, move and change during combat, and players will need to adjust their attacks as necessary to take advantage of weaknesses or perhaps do any damage at all.

## IMMORTAL COMBAT

Arguably the most controversial gameplay element in the new Prince of Persia is the simple fact that the Prince cannot die. If he decides to go plummeting off the nearest cliff, Elika reaches down with her magical powers and pulls our young adventurer up, depositing him neatly on the ledge from which he fell. During combat, if the Prince is low on health (shown only by a change in the Prince's movement, as the only HUD element is the enemy's health) and is dealt the supposed death blow, a quick time event pops up to give the player one final chance to save the Prince's skin. If you perform the action in time, the Prince bounces back, fending off the killing strike, if not – don't worry – Elika will once again come to the rescue and pull our hero from the brink of death. While there's no punishment for falling to your death (other than frustration), monsters from whom Elika has saved you will regenerate a portion of their health – making them just that little bit more difficult to kill.

It's a bit of an odd system when one first encounters it, and might annoy veteran platform gamers who have become almost obsessed with the idea of death and punishment in videogames, but it does genuinely work because absolutely every part of it is ingrained in the play dynamic. If the Prince is about to die, it's a game element that saves him, not a quick tap of the F9 key to resume from your last save, or a fade-to-black and a reset to the last fountain or flag you ran past. After spending some time with this new approach to life and death in a platform game, one realises just how arbitrary and meaningless the concept of 'lives' and checkpoints has become in this age of gaming. Sure, it'll take some getting used to, and initially seems to make the game ridiculously easy, but the fact is that you will not get past a monster/puzzle/death-defying jump if you can't figure it out – and that's where player skill combined with trial and error is still very much a part of the game. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows

**Roof run:** We're not sure if it's the gauntlet or a late-night programming session that's really responsible for this little manoeuvre, but we don't care – the gravity-defying Prince can now crawl along the underside of a roof for a short distance.



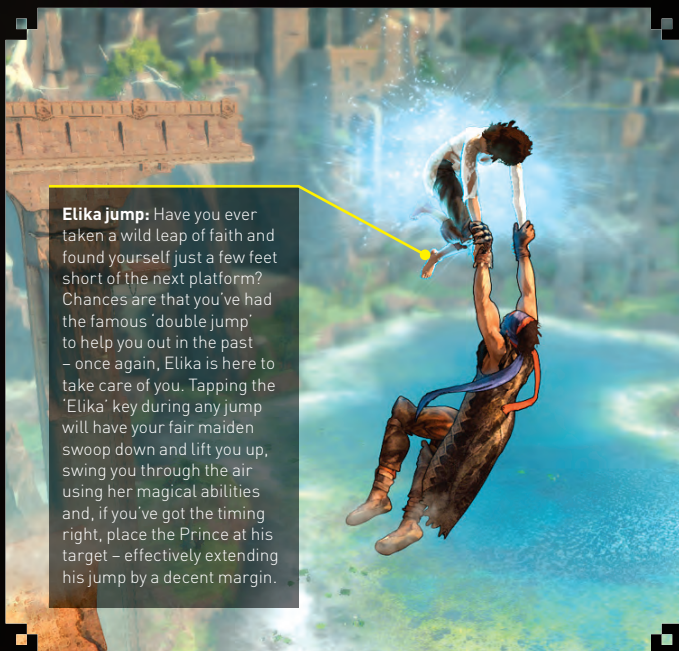
**Wall slide:** If you're trapped atop a towering spire, with no clear path to your abeyant waypoint below, fear not – the Prince's gauntlet once again comes to the rescue. Grab hold of the nearest rock face or wall and slide down to safety at a nice, leisurely pace.



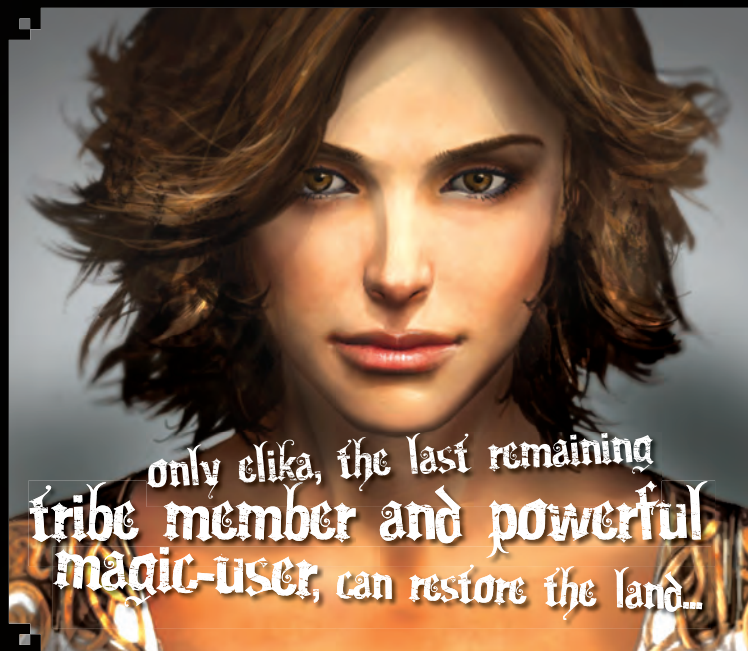




**Jump pads:** Erika's ancient magic has the ability to unlock the potential of these equally-ancient jump pads. Pounce onto one of them and Erika will activate it, sending the pair gracefully springing off to their faraway destination.



**Elika jump:** Have you ever taken a wild leap of faith and found yourself just a few feet short of the next platform? Chances are that you've had the famous 'double jump' to help you out in the past – once again, Erika is here to take care of you. Tapping the 'Elika' key during any jump will have your fair maiden swoop down and lift you up, swing you through the air using her magical abilities and, if you've got the timing right, place the Prince at his target – effectively extending his jump by a decent margin.



only elika, the last remaining tribe member and powerful magic-user, can restore the land...



Of course, the Prince also has Erika at his side, and she does wherever he does – wall runs and vine-grappling included. Thankfully, she (almost) never gets in the way. Whenever the Prince hops up onto a ledge or climbs across a chasm wall, expect Erika to be waiting for a helping hand above or an open-armed Prince below (although this is all performed automatically). The system makes for an interesting pace and ultimately lends itself to a more human sense of movement through the levels. Instead of the player controlling some sort of machine that flits and dashes through the environment at an unrelenting speed, the simple fact that the Prince is gentlemanly enough to take half a second out of his quest to help Erika up onto a ledge, often followed by a quick smarmy comment about her weight, livens up the entire experience and helps bring the player a step further beyond the fourth wall.



# Q&A: BEN MATTES

**P**RINCE OF PERSIA PRODUCER, Ben Mattes took some time out of his busy schedule to answer a few of our nagging questions. Thanks to Megarom, Ubisoft and Ben for their time and effort.

## 1. Is this new series officially called *Prodigy*, or is the name still on the cards?

"No, the game has no subtitle, it is simply: Prince of Persia. This is to emphasize the fact that the brand has taken a fresh new start with a new Prince, story and kingdom."

## 2. The Prince in this new series is a lot more acrobatic and tends to get to places previous Princes could only dream of, how has that affected level design in terms of both challenge and freedom?

"The Prince is and will always be an athlete and acrobatic prodigy. Therefore, we are always thinking of new possibilities for the Prince to defy the gravity and push his skills without making him a magical and invincible character. He is a human, after all, but a very skilful one. The glove the Prince wears on his left hand represents the acrobatic side of him. This glove has been previously found while he was venturing around the world seeking treasures and glory. With this glove, he can perform wall-runs, he can grip smoothly down very high vertical walls, he can swing to further distance with rings, and he can even run on ceilings for a brief moment. There are also more ingredients for the Prince to use spread out in the world structure: rings, vines, cracks, poles... Also, the Prince can perform very long sequences of acrobatics without having to stop and look where to go next on every platform. We wanted the player to be able to make awesome and long sequences of acrobatics: wall-run, jump, wall-run, ring swing, jump, pole... This vision of making long sequences really influenced our level design, particularly in the flow, so that it would be easier for the player to perceive the ingredients while in the acrobatic sequence, and keep on going without having to stop. With the open-world structure and multiple paths, the player has total freedom to choose how he unfolds the game. Our level designer also spent a lot of time creating multiple level elements that would push the use of every movement. This was particularly made with the light seed placement in the game. Players will have to use all the available acrobatics and their intuition to get to some secret areas where light seeds, the currency in the game, are hidden. This will prove to be a fun challenge and will make the player explore the world to the smallest details."

## 3. What were the major influences and

## inspirations behind the design of the game?

"Our main inspiration was of course the Prince of Persia franchise... We have to pay respect to what makes every Prince of Persia and its DNA, which is a good balance of acrobatics, combat and puzzles."

Many eastern world games inspired this Prince of Persia. One of them which the entire team respects with their just heart is Okami. The entire style of Okami and its way of immersing us in its classical Japanese fantastic world is amazingly done. We were inspired by Okami's graphical style, and its parallel healed and corrupted world. We really wanted to immerse the player with our vision of Prince of Persia just like Okami did with its whole structure.

We wanted to revolutionize the combat experience in action/adventure genre and we created the duel combat system. We wanted to create unbelievable combat movement and use dramatic camera sequence just like Final Fantasy: Advent Children. Final Fantasy: Advent Children's lack of gravity throughout the spectacular combat sequences is something we wanted to re-create in Prince of Persia, particularly for the cool aerial moves. Also, games like Soul Calibur really inspired our combo system where you can create 14+ hit combos using your sword, gauntlet, Elika and acrobatics, which each are represented with one button."

## 4. A big part of the new series is Elika and the deathless system she brings. What led you to implement this system and how do you think fans of the previous two series will respond to it?

"First, it is important to mention that the 'save-me system' doesn't take effect at all the difficulty levels of the game, contrary to what a lot of people think. Prince of Persia is all about the satisfaction of succeeding in performing difficult acrobatic and combat sequences and we wouldn't change this for anything. The main goal behind the 'save-me system' is that we wanted to make the punishment of dying less frustrating to players. Some games are easy to play but at the same time very punishing to the player when they die. For example, imagine a platform game where the level takes you 10 minutes to go through but you die at 9:30 through it and you are brought back to the beginning... This is frustrating because you have to start the level all over again because of a small misstep... In Prince of Persia, when a player fails an acrobatic or a combat movement, he is saved by Elika and brought back to the last saved platform while performing an acrobatic feat, and while in combat, the monster will regain some health... Therefore, the player







needs to succeed this sequence he missed without too much frustration of restarting the level from far away, a failure screen, a loading screen... Also, the "save-me system" is well implemented in the story and plays an important role in the character development."

**5. Also, with regards to the deathless system, how did this concept affect the level, puzzle and combat design?**

"It didn't affect drastically the level design in the game as it is very similar to a checkpoint system. The "save-me system" can only be used in acrobatic and combat, because you can't die while trying to solve a puzzle."

**6. Will Erika always be there to save the Prince? Can her magic 'run out'? Better yet, do her powers get upgraded as you play?**

"Erika doesn't have a magic meter because we wanted her to always be positive for the player and having a meter which would run out would be frustrating. She will always be there to save the Prince. Erika will have upgradable powers which will be unlocked by the player using the light seeds, which serves as currency, that are scattered in the healed world after it has been restored

from the Corruption. Erika's powers will be used to navigate to new region in the open-world structure. Players will choose which power to unlock and this will affect how the game unfolds."

**7. Does the open-ended nature of the game world mean the Prince is likely to want to return to places or people of interest?**

"Yes, the game features two different states for each region, corrupted and healed, and both states will feature different gameplay elements. The corrupted world will challenge the player to reach the fertile ground in a perilous and dangerous world and the healed lands will be more about exploration and light seed collection. Players will be able to count on a teleport system after a region has been healed to make navigation faster. Also, the temple, which serves as the main hub in the game, will be a place where the player will want to return to unlock Erika's power once he has enough light seeds. Again, the teleport power of Erika will make travelling and backtracking less frustrating."

**8. Character interaction seems to play a much bigger part than in previous PoP games; do you feel it's a better way to bring the story to the player than simple cut scenes?**

"One of our main mandates in Prince of Persia was to push the character relation for both gameplay and storyline. Erika was included with this in mind and was meant to always be a positive for the player. The relation will evolve through every aspect of the game. Every gameplay element was considered in the building of the character relation. Characters will evolve and this will reflect in their comments, the body language and all their in-game interactions. For example, here is one small example: Erika will be standing farther away from the Prince at the beginning of the game and close towards the end as she gains more confidence in him. Even the eye contact was considered while they are performing acrobatics cooperatively. All those little details make this relation feel truer and players will care more for the character. Cut-scenes also play a major role in the game, and we added the new on-demand-dialogue accessible anytime, anywhere by the player by triggering a button. This on-demand-dialogue system gives the player the choice to access, whether he wants it or not, narrative sequences to learn more on elements of the game. This is a bit like the audio tapes found in BioShock."

**9. What features or game dynamic elements had to be dropped that you would have liked to see in the final release?**

"No major feature was definitely dropped after we came into the production phase. We did make many minor tweaks in our combat system after play testing, but nothing major. The animation team worked in key frame through the entire project, but because of time delays, we had to use motion capture for some real-time cinematics in the game. The entire in-game animation gameplay, acrobatic and combat, were 100% done in key frame though."

**10. How much has the game changed from the original concept / idea and in what ways?**

"The game didn't drastically change after the conception and pre-production phase. The open-world structure is the element we did do the most research on, and that varied the most in the pre-production phase. We did many prototypes to really define the best world structure that would fit the Prince of Persia experience. From a completely sandbox world to a more linear one, we did many tests and finally managed to reach a compromise in between the two, keeping the core fundamental linear experience of Prince of Persia with the freedom of multiple paths."

**11. How has using the Scimitar Engine affected development as opposed to the Jade Engine? Do you see Scimitar as an engine that still has a lot of life left in it?**

"Scimitar is still a young and new engine that is always upgraded and brought up to date with many new features. The Scimitar engine did let us create a vast, beautiful and very detailed world that the Jade engine couldn't let us do. It is Ubisoft's main next-generation engine for the moment."

**12. What plans do you have for downloadable content?**

"No downloadable content has been officially announced yet."

**13. The move to a new Prince in a new world sets this series far apart from the previous games; is there any hope of revisiting the Sands of Time?**

"We closed the Sands of Time trilogy with the last title back in 2005, The Two Thrones, and now we have a new Prince of Persia with a new story, a new Prince and kingdom, but it is possible that we might revisit the Sands of Time in the future. Also as a reminder, Disney is working on a Prince of Persia: Sands of Time movie due to release in 2010."

**14. What was the key development platform? What challenges did you face working across platforms and did one particular platform impose development limitations on other platforms?**

"The game runs perfectly on both platforms and there were no issues regarding the development on either of them. The game will run very well and smoothly on both the platforms."

**15. In general, what single factor (hardware / resources / etc.) limits game development the most?**

"The hardware wasn't really an issue as we managed to create with what it offered, which is plenty. The two main factors that probably affect the development of every game are the experience of the team and the time of production. For Prince of Persia, we are lucky to have one of the most experienced and talented teams in the industry. A lot of members previously worked on Assassin's Creed and we still have many people from the original Sands of Time game. As for the production time, Ubisoft guarantees to always deliver polished games, and don't worry that Prince of Persia won't be as polished as it could be." **NAG**



# NAG 2009 READER SURVEY

## YES WE CAN!

Make sure you complete the survey  
included in this issue and send it back to us.  
Win great prizes.  
Be a part of the big picture.  
Do it now!

WORK IN  
PROGRESS: NAG  
REDESIGN 2009  
\*Not Final

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office



**Note:** No late entries will be considered | Prizes cannot be exchanged for cash | Our decision is final



What do you mean you've got cobwebs down there?!



## SPIDER-MAN: WEB OF SHADOWS

**SPIDER-MAN: WEB OF SHADOWS** represents a 'disconnect' in the gaming market that is bound to grow before it gets better. This is the gulf between the hardcore gamers who have sustained the market up until this point, and the relatively new 'consumer' gamers who are likely to expand the market in very necessary ways. For the market to grow, these new gamers need to be dragged in with games that are exciting, appealing and, above all, easy to handle. This results in a high level of frustration within the hardcore crowd, naturally, who demand more from their games. And with so many gaming journalists being hardcore gamers, the reviews that this game has been getting are unjustly harsh.

*Spider-Man: Web of Shadows* is an enjoyable title. It might not feature the best graphics or the finest sound, and the missions may get a little repetitive after a while, but the game is still enjoyable, and shows progress within the ideals set out in the series from the word go. The player is given more freedom than before, with a greater degree of developmental control, and the ability to make choices that affect the game world. This is where the series has always been going. The controls might be simple, but the game is still fun. And that's what games are supposed to be all about.

In this vision of the Spider-Man universe, the player gets to control both the 'normal' character, and the symbiot-infested 'black suit' Spider-Man, using both the good and evil sides of the whole to get through a long and action-packed title. The uncomplicated control scheme is combo-driven in terms of combat, and the free-roaming aspect of the game will have the player web-slinging through a large environment.

It might not be what the hardcore crowd wants, but its wide appeal on many levels will please almost everyone else. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius

### Bottom Line

An uncomplicated and enjoyable title, this edition of Spider-Man is intended more for the mainstream market than hardcore gamers.

#### Pros:

Easy to play  
Free roaming  
Player has an effect on the world

#### Cons:

Graphics could be better  
Missions get a little monotonous  
Button masher



Technical Score

**60**  
OUT OF 100

Reviewer's Score

**80**  
OUT OF 100

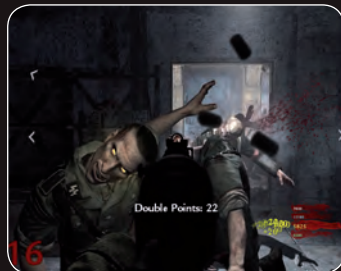
PC Spec → 1 2 3 4 5



## WHAT WE'RE PLAYING



Only *Guitar Hero World Tour* could stop the mighty *Call of Duty: World at War* from making a clean sweep of the WWP charts this month. Our lust for killing Nazis – both alive and undead – knocked perennial favourite *Quake III Arena* completely off the list! We don't expect it to be gone too long, though. It's survived this long, there must be something we like about it! One thing's for certain, though: *CoD5* is here to stay!



Rank	Game
1	Call of Duty: World at War Multiplayer
2	Call of Duty: World at War Nazi Zombies
3	Guitar Hero World Tour
4	Call of Duty: World at War Single Player
5	Fallout 3
6	Far Cry 2
7	Left 4 Dead
8	Midnight Club: Los Angeles
9	Battlefield: Bad Company
10	Rock Band 2 (Imported)
11	Dead Space
12	Gears of War 2
13	LittleBigPlanet
14	Sacred 2: Fallen Angel
15	Neverwinter Nights 2
16	Grand Theft Auto IV
17	Wip3out HD
18	Far Cry 2 Map Editor
19	Need for Speed: Undercover
20	Fallen Sword
21	Poker... the real thing with chips and money!
22	The Last Guy
23	Tomb Raider: Underworld
24	Geometry Wars 2

## ANATOMY OF A REVIEW

A quick guide to the NAG Reviews section

**VITAL INFO:** Where to get it, what it costs and who you need.

**PCSPEC:** Our rating for the hardware requirements of games is space age. Check the box on the other page.

**GAME NAME:** This end up. The bit you tell your friends. The bit you remember – with your brain!

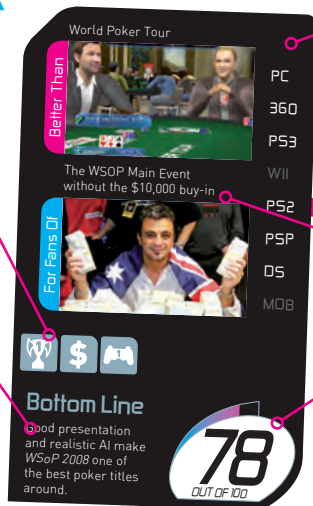
**AWARDS:** Our awards mean something: it means we agreed on a game, which is rare, trust us.



## THINK INSIDE THE BOX

**ICONS:** It's just like a super-ultra mini-review: you just glance and learn!

**BOTTOM LINE:** Too many words, not enough pictures? Don't worry – we'll bottom-line it for ya.



**PLATFORMS:** Check it: new coloured-tabbed system showing which systems the game appears on and which one we reviewed it on.

**LIKE, Y'KNOW, STUFF:** We try to keep things in perspective using these two blocks.

**SCORE:** Sometimes it's a number (usually it is). Sometimes it's a picture, or something snarky. We like to mix things up a little.

## WEB SCORES

CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR [PC]



NAG	91/100
METACRITIC	87/100
GAMERANKINGS	87/100

GUITAR HERO WORLD TOUR [360]



NAG	88/100
METACRITIC	85/100
GAMERANKINGS	85/100

TOMB RAIDER: UNDERWORLD [360]



NAG	87/100
METACRITIC	78/100
GAMERANKINGS	78/100



## THE REVIEW ICONS

The **NAG** review icons aim to help you get a better idea of what a game is like.



**ACTION:** When you gotta blast, smash, crash and mash your way to victory, it's Action.



**BABYSITTING:** Put the kids to bed, you gotta Babysit this game to make it love you.



**BITCHIN':** When a game just plain rocks despite everything, then it is worthy of the Bitchin'.



**BORING:** Grab your blankie and teddy, we might be in for some Boring to put you to sleep.



**BUGGY:** Truth be told, there is just no excusing a Buggy game because games aren't cheap.



**BUTTON MASHER:** Using only the power of your manly thumb, you can beat this game, Button Masher.



**CASH-IN/LICENSE:** Some companies totally Cash-in on License games, good or bad.



**CINEMATIC:** Sweet-ass cut-scenes, dramatic camerawork and awesome scenes are Cinematic.



**CLONE:** We've seen it before and we'll see it again, because people always Clone good stuff.



**CO-OP:** It is dangerous to go alone. Take this. A friend. Water with cooperation for Co-op Attack.



**COMPETITIVE:** You don't think Ranked Match is a feature; you think it should be mandatory.



**FOREIGN:** No clue what the game is about or even what is said? Confusing plot? It's Foreign!



**MULTIPLAYER:** The maximum number of people who can play per copy of the game.



**ONLINE:** For games that play well with others and generally mean playing with others, Online.



**PARTY:** Get some friends and move the couch, Party games are frikkin' sweet.



**PIECE OF POO:** Sometimes no matter how hard you try, you just can't squeeze a diamond out of a turd.



**STUPID PEOPLE:** Don't worry little buddy, this game holds your hand like a friend.

## WILL IT RUN? - PC GAME SPECS

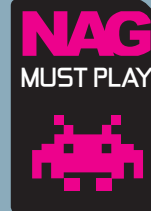
PC game specs are a pain for us, because we need to list them for those people who don't consult the box before buying a game. Instead, the reviews will now have a nice number ranking on the side. Higher numbers mean a game is more machine intensive. If a game has all the numbers lit up, it'll run on a 5-year-old piece of junk up to the most bad-ass of machines.

- 5 Your machine has a DirectX 10 graphics card, a dual-core or higher CPU and 2GB or more RAM. You are the centre of gaming-fu. This game will honour your investment. **[DX10 graphics card; dual/quad-core CPU; 2GB+ RAM]**
- 4 Your graphics card has a respectable 256MB of memory and your CPU sits at the higher end of 2GHz, backed by 1-2GB of RAM. A worthy rig for a worthy game. **[256MB graphics card with DX9; 2GHz or more; 1-2GB RAM]**
- 3 Your card sits between 128 and 256MB of RAM with at least DirectX 8 support, while your 2GHz Pentium 4 churns happily with between 512MB and 1GB of RAM. We assume you're slowly saving for an upgrade. **[256MB+ graphics card with DX8; 2GHz Pentium 4; 512MB-1GB RAM]**
- 2 Okay, so you have a graphics card that falls below the 128MB memory point but supports DX8, a chip that you can't call 2GHz even if you wanted and you have 256MB or less RAM. Your PC might be getting more Office action than you'd like to admit. **[128MB or lower graphics card with DX8; Below 2GHz chip; 256MB or lower RAM]**
- 1 You really don't think about your PC specs much. In fact, any hint of upgrade money is spent on something more practical, like a coffee maker with a timer. Fresh coffee first thing in the morning always beats playing games. **[Can run XP, will play game]**

## NAG AWARDS

**EDITOR'S CHOICE:** If a game boasts this award, it means everyone in the office agrees that the game rocks. Serials.

**MUST PLAY:** The thing about the Must Play award is that it can happen anywhere, with any game, good or bad. Somehow, you must play this game.



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If your company isn't listed here, phone **NAG** on [011] 704-2679

## THE REVIEWERS



New Year's Resolutions are serious business. When you're dealing with a new year, you can't fart about. You have to be mature about things; you have to throw your childhood follies in the trash and become an adult, get a mortgage, pay taxes and diversify your portfolio.

### MIKTAR DRACON

**Miktar's New Year's Resolutions:** To catch up on the backlog of games built up due to spending too much time in retro-land, flash-topia and indie-ville. Lose weight. Grow a tail. Build a level in *LittleBigPlanet* that becomes critically acclaimed. Stretch.



### WALT PRETORIUS

**Walt's New Year's Resolutions:** To become the king and queen of buttons. To stop being so rubbish at *Midnight Club: Los Angeles*. Invest. Finish his novel. Wear pants more often. Finish *Grimgrimore* on the PlayStation 2.



### DANE REMENDES

**Dane's New Year's Resolutions:** To watch the entire *Babylon 5* series in one sitting. To finish *Time Splitters: Future Perfect* on the Xbox. Read the book *One-Dimensional Man* by Herbert Marcuse. Write down that dream he had in which the world ended - it'd make a sweet movie.



### TARRYN VAN DER BYL

**Tarryn's New Year's Resolutions:** To get the "Seriously 2.0" Achievement in *Gears of War 2*. Wear pants less often. Visit America instead of the UK. Get the "Bladder of Steel" Achievement in *Rock Band 2*. To go to the Penny Arcade Expo with Miktar.



### CHRIS BISTLINE

**Chris's New Year's Resolutions:** To learn the art of Zen. To learn the art of Patience. To learn the art of Inner Peace. Buy a new keyboard. Buy a new mouse. Get better at *Quake III*, then kill them all.



### MICHAEL JAMES

**Michael's New Year's Resolutions:** To not make a single reference to actual screen resolutions when talking about New Year's Resolutions. Fire everyone at NAG and buy a jet ski. Get the "Smile" Achievement in *Geometry Wars 2*.



### ADAM LIEBMAN

**Adam's New Year's Resolutions:** To save enough money to buy the life-sized replica of the Batmobile from *The Dark Knight*. To finish *Steel Battalion* on the Xbox. Using only old cups and some Styrofoam to make beautiful music of the night.



### GEOFF BURROWS

**Geoff's New Year's Resolutions:** To pwn more noobs. To finish *Ico* on the PlayStation 2. Come to terms with his inner fury. Learn to samba. Study the fugacious yet highly volatile trans-humanist concepts regarding meta-circuitry of the mind. Wear a kilt to a wedding.

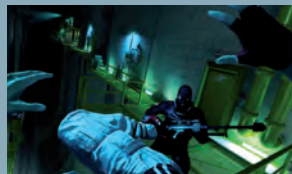


### GEARS OF WAR 2 [360]



NAG	91/100
METACRITIC	93/100
GAMERANKINGS	94/100

### MIRROR'S EDGE [360]



NAG	89/100
METACRITIC	79/100
GAMERANKINGS	80/100

### FALLOUT 3 [PC]



NAG	90/100
METACRITIC	92/100
GAMERANKINGS	90/100





Nothing like the smell of radiation in the morning



I'm Defender Anne Marie Morgan with the Outcasts. Steer clear of here, and you should be able to continue with that whole "not dying" plan.



## FALLOUT 3

**M**ANY YEARS AGO, A company by the name of Interplay released a little game called *Fallout*. *Fallout* was a post-apocalyptic role-playing game; one that had solid role-playing mechanics, beautifully detailed graphics and a simple yet practical main quest. It also gave players something that few games before it (and, indeed, few games since) had: freedom, the freedom to carve your own destiny however you saw fit. If the player felt that the best way to save their Vault was to kill all who stood in their way, the game accommodated for it. If you decided that you'd rather peddle drugs to minors or perhaps save a city from mob rule, you could. It is games like *Fallout* and the brilliant *Fallout 2* that helped change computer role-playing games from number-crunching nerd machines to timeless, thought-provoking and emotional journeys of discovery.

With a legacy of that magnitude, *Fallout 3* has a lot to live up to. Not only does it need to keep the mountains of long-time fans happy, it needs to succeed in this

modern gaming environment and attract new players. Does it perform? Is *Fallout 3* a worthy successor to the series, and does it deserve the coveted Vault Boy on the back of the box? Should you, as either a hardened veteran or normal, map-obsessed potential newcomer give a damn about this game? Yes, it absolutely does, and you most certainly should.

Making a departure from the ravaged West Coast of the United States, *Fallout 3* takes place in the equally ruined wastelands of the East Coast Washington D.C. area. The player begins in Vault 101: one of the few vaults left unopened since the bombs first fell and blanketed the Earth in radioactive fallout. It's here that the player begins to craft their character, choosing from the typical skills and statistics *Fallout* players should be accustomed to, but in a decidedly Bethesda style by putting the player through a number of tests and exercises and recommending a 'class' for them to take. Shortly into the game, the player's father mysteriously disappears from the Vault, and



it's up to you to find him. This begins your journey, but finding dad won't be the only thing on your mind when you venture out into the Capital Wasteland.

In keeping with *Fallout* tradition, the main quest is fairly straightforward, not terribly complicated and quite doable in a fairly short amount of time. If you're driven and determined to beeline through the main story, you might find yourself done with *Fallout 3* in less than ten hours (possibly even less than six, if you take a few shortcuts). However, like its predecessors, the game's real appeal and replay value lie in its side quests - exploration of the Wasteland and interaction with many of the game world's weird and wonderful inhabitants. Often, this approach to game-time extension could be seen as a bit of a cheek, but the quality of the side quests is such that they far outweigh that of the main quest. While the game does have its share of 'Fed-Ex' quests and other RPG mainstays, the delivery of each challenge to the player and the depth of the NPC delivering it mark



## KEEPING YOU COMPANY

When you're not killing Raiders, Slavers or hordes of radioactive Feral Ghouls, there are tons of other bad guys looking to grind your bones into paste, not to mention a couple of friendly (or not-so-friendly) locals worth chatting to in the Wasteland.

**Ghouls:** They're just like humans, only a little, you know, gooier. Thanks to the ridiculous levels of radiation they've soaked up over the years, Ghouls have a tendency to live for a long time; there are even some around who still remember the war.

**Feral Ghouls:** These poor, twisted creatures where once as sane as their slimy brethren, but have long since succumbed to madness from extensive radiation exposure. They seek to kill

almost all living creatures. Yeah, you can call them zombies if it'll make you feel better.

**Brotherhood of Steel:** The 'Merry Men' of the Wasteland, the Brotherhood stand for the good and the helpless, but some of their number believe they have lost their way and have become obsessed with gathering technology instead of helping those in need. Make sure you know where your allegiance lies.

**Enclave:** Packing the meanest armour and the deadliest weapons, the Enclave, under the command of President Eden, will stop at nothing to bring order and 'harmony' to the wild lands of D.C.

**Raiders:** Vagabonds and other miscreants tend to form the ranks of the Raider gangs that roam

the countryside looking for easy pickings. While it's usually straightforward enough to deal with a couple of them out on patrol, their encampments dotted around the world are tough nuts to crack.

**Traders:** Travelling the wastes with their faithful load-bearing Brahmin and a heavily armed guard at their side, traders are a great source of ammunition, weapons, chems and other necessities when the nearest town is out of reach.

**Super Mutants:** These bulgy yellow behemoths like to carry big, heavy weapons and squash puny humans with them. Unfortunately, due to a bit too much scientific tinkering, they're pretty much all of the aggressive variety, but rumour has it that there are a couple who might return words sooner than bullets if you've got the charm.

The Vault Assisted Targeting System is the greatest part of combat in *Fallout 3*. It manages to find a balance between real-time and the turn-based combat that helped bring *Fallout* to stardom. Every single time I used VATS, I found myself staring in awe at the gory outcome – it never gets old.



Lock picking and hacking are the two mini-games to get your player into all sorts of trouble. If you need access to a secure location and haven't managed to sweet-talk your way in, there are few locks that can stand up to a well-handled hairpin.

Lockpick Skill	77
Bobby Pins	24
Lock Level	Easy

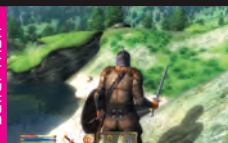
Force Lock [62%] F)  
Exit E)

Dogmeat, the original Vault Dweller's faithful companion, is back. Unfortunately, he tends to get in the way more than he helps. Navigating tight corridors or even messy floors quickly becomes an annoyance when he's constantly trying to stand beneath you.



Oblivion

Better Than



PC  
360  
PS3  
WII

Fallout 2

Worse Than



PS2  
PSP  
DS  
MOB



### Bottom Line

No matter if you're a veteran of the series or a newcomer, *Fallout 3* has something for you.





## SIGHTSEEING

Despite the fact that the game world is a fair bit smaller than Bethesda's other titles or the previous *Fallout* games, the Capital Wasteland is filled to the brim with interesting places to visit and people to meet, chat up or stab in the back.

**1. D.C. Ruins:** Whether you're looking for monuments like the White House or the Lincoln Memorial, or just a few Super Mutants to beat up, D.C. is the place to visit. Navigation through the city is limited, but some travellers claim the old subway system still has its uses if you're handy with a map.

**2. Little Lamplight:** This underground town of whippersnappers and ankle-biters has managed to hold out against slavers and mutants for years. Adults aren't welcome, so if you've got business with the locals, you'll need to earn their trust before they even let you past the front gate.

**3. Paradise Falls:** Home to the Slavers and a great source of income for the morally unbiased, Paradise Falls is a must-visit destination for those with cash to spend or a penchant for a lifetime of servitude.

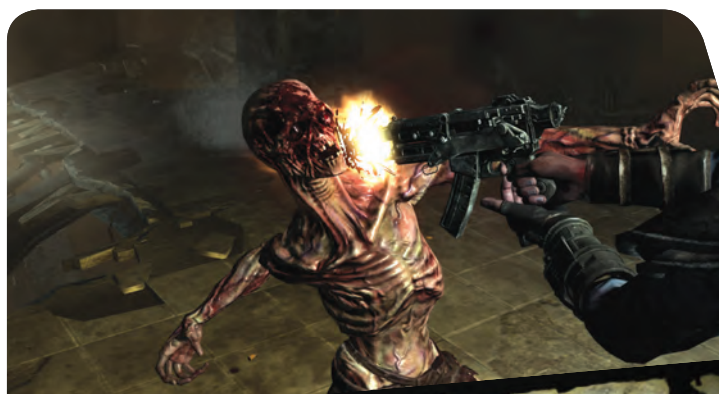
**4. Rivet City:** It might look like a bucket of old bolts from the outside, but this ironclad monstrosity is one of the few places in the Capital Wasteland people dare call "safe."

**5. GNR:** Galaxy News Radio - the heart and soul of freedom in the Wasteland. Kick back with top-DJ Three Dog or just hang out with the station's Brotherhood protectorate; there's always some good that needs doing around here.

**6. The Citadel:** Home of the Brotherhood of Steel, The Citadel was carved from the ruins of the Pentagon and now forms their base of operations and training. If you're looking to suit up with some of that shiny power armour, this is the place to be.

**7. Tenpenny Tower:** If Tenpenny Tower is out to prove anything, it's that luxury still exists in post-apocalyptic D.C. Live it up with ol' Tenpenny himself or cruise for company in the common room; as long as you help keep out those filthy ghouls, you're welcome in the Tower.

**8. Megaton:** If you're on the lookout for a lost family member, a place to stay or just a glass in which to drown your sorrows, Megaton is a one-stop town for the modern traveller. Just be sure you don't touch that giant, undetonated nuclear bomb in the town centre - the local cult gets a little kooky when people start fidgeting.







## S.P.E.C.I.A.L. NEEDS

Strength, Perception, Endurance, Charisma, Intelligence, Agility and Luck make up the famous *Fallout* S.P.E.C.I.A.L. system. It's a system that encourages exploration of character customisation, and doesn't restrict players to any specific class or method of playing. Combined with the free-form skills that power the game's mechanics, the system opens up traditional role-playing to allow for truly unique characters. Players could, for example, choose to specialise in small weapons (including pistols, SMOs and rifles), stealth and science, to ensure they're never locked out and can pack enough heat to take down an army of Feral Ghouls, or a combination of unarmed, speech and medicine to sweet-talk their way out of most situations, but be able to take care of business when the going gets tough.

Thankfully, most skills are equally useful in *Fallout 3*. Primary statistics are useable during specific conversations, and the speech skill will help keep even the most devious of players out of trouble. Not once did I feel I'd wasted skill points when I put them into the non-combat skills, as a quick wit and a sneaky exit plan play as big a part as blasting down your assailant with hot plasma.



every quest as a special occasion. Players tend to feel compelled to complete quests for more reasons than monetary reward, but for those who are just out to score a couple of caps (bottle caps, the currency of the Wastes), extortion and blackmail are two excellent ways to bulk up your wallet.

Unfortunately, while Bethesda has clearly been hard at work getting *Fallout 3* as close to perfection as possible, it suffers terribly in the technical department. Robotic animation and lifeless characters are still a big problem, but they are at least a few steps up from *Oblivion* – unlike the floaty and unresponsive first-person camera that still finds itself despicably detached from the game world. While these are all elements that take a bit of getting used to – but ultimately don't ruin the game – the same can't be said of the ridiculous number of bugs. From random crashes to failing to start at all, *Fallout 3* comes dangerously close to the 'broken' label. There are a number of quick fixes and a single patch at the time of writing (with another, bigger patch on its way), and many people have no complaints at all, but there are still irritating

problems that players on all three platforms are reportedly facing. Thankfully, there's a positive light on the technical front to help balance out the niggly bits. The textures and models in the game world are designed with more care and attention to detail than in any other game I've seen: damaged roads, dangling highways and ruined buildings litter the landscape, and physics-enabled trash and salvageable items are strewn everywhere for the player to pick up and throw around.

The gameplay is good, but it's important for a *Fallout* title to pack that little something extra: not to pull any punches and make sure the player has a smirk on their face as often as possible. The dark, twisted humour and relentless freedom that made the previous titles so popular have been toned down a notch. Children are safe from well-placed tactical nukes and most NPCs' attitudes towards drugs have become so nonchalant that it almost totally removes that dirty feeling players get when 'dealing'. It's completely fair and understandable that, with the gaming market as sensitive as it is, Bethesda has dodged some potentially

difficult situations, but the slightly reorientated approach does take a little getting used to if you've been hanging out with the original Vault Dweller for a while. Still, it's entirely possible to play the game as a complete jackass. Most quests have been designed with at least three ways to complete them: the good way, the bad way and the easy way, often with a few degrees of variation between them.

*Fallout 3* is not a perfect game, and almost all complaints about technical bugs, the length of the main quest and cries of anguish over the choice of first-person representation are valid, but one shouldn't be put off by them. Despite its flaws, *Fallout 3* remains true to its heritage. It is the evolution of the series and opens it up to countless new gamers who missed the magic that was *Fallout* and *Fallout 2*. While it isn't a better game than its predecessors, it manages to stand as both a representative of the series for this generation and an engaging, entertaining and extremely playable game on its own.

**NAG**  
Geoff Burrows





## TOMB RAIDER: UNDERWORLD

**THE TOMB RAIDER SERIES** isn't everyone's cup of tea. Some people probably don't fancy the idea of having to focus mainly on acrobatic shenanigans and only having to whip out their pistols when bats start pestering you while you're hanging from a ledge. Others don't particularly like having to wrack their brains trying to solve puzzles. Then there are those who think that Lara Croft is smoking hot, but wouldn't be caught dead playing any game that stars the virtual vixen. For those of you who understand the elation that you feel when you manage to solve a particularly complex puzzle or finally find that route through an area that you've been trapped in for the last half hour, then *Tomb Raider: Underworld* is sure to tickle you in all the right places. [Didn't we say no to dirty jokes this time? Ed]

*Underworld* is all about adventuring. There's a fair amount of action and gunplay, but at its core, the game is about exploration. When you are forced to pull out your dual pistols, it's usually because some tiger or bat (and occasionally some mythical enemies like the Kraken and undead guardians called Thralls) is looking to take a chunk out of Lara's neck. Sure, you'll occasionally be forced to fight off

a few poachers or mercenaries, but the game does a great job of making you feel like you're all alone in uncharted territory. It's just you, Lara and huge areas filled with all sorts of hazards and wild animals. The locations are absolutely gorgeous – whether you're dodging panthers in Mexico, scaling cliffs in Thailand or adventuring through a massive network of caves deep beneath the ocean, you're guaranteed tons of eye candy while wading through *Underworld*.

A huge part of any *Tomb Raider* game is the puzzle element. *Underworld* doesn't disappoint here, offering plenty of opportunities to test both your puzzle-solving abilities as well as your patience. Some of the puzzles are epic in scale. In Mexico for example, you're given access to Lara's motorcycle (allowing you to roam free around the area until you get bored) and tasked with partaking in a number of seemingly mundane activities. That is, until you realise that these activities all 'join together' to become part of a much larger central puzzle. The locations lend themselves to this sort of puzzle quite well. The environments are so vast that you'll often find yourself venturing back and forth between areas you've already visited when



you realise that you'd forgotten to do a certain thing that is required of you in order for progress to be made (such as picking up that inconspicuous little carving of a Jaguar head...) on your first visit. The game almost feels like an open-world platform game with certain limitations imposed upon it. Speaking of platform gaming, *Underworld* has some phenomenal set pieces and opportunities to flaunt your ability to jump from one rock to another at high speeds. Some of the sequences are very elaborate: one puzzle involves Lara having to work her way up a gigantic pillar by performing the usual sequence of swinging from poles and jumping to grab onto outcroppings, but this time with an added twist – the pillar is divided into rotating sections, meaning that you need to have split-second timing to jump up to the next section, which is rotating in the opposite direction to the one that you are on. It's not always easy to spot where you need to be going or what you need to be doing, because the walls that you can climb and the poles from which you can swing often seamlessly blend into the environment. You'll often sit for ages trying to figure out a way to reach your destination, and just when you start to lose hope, you'll





spot a ledge that you can grab onto that you didn't see before.

Lara looks great, as always, but she's definitely looking better than ever in this new title. She's also more nimble than she's ever been, and her animations accurately show just how graceful she really is. Lara gets covered in dirt after she's rolled around in the sand, and her skin glistens after she's gone for a swim or if she's been standing around in the rain. She'll push foliage aside as she passes by, and she'll grimace if she doesn't get a firm hold on whatever ledge she's just leapt towards. She's a much more believable character this time around, but she still has her moments of insanity where she'll attempt an impossible leap across a giant ravine on her motorcycle. Her motivations this time involve finding Mjölnir, the fabled hammer of Thor, the Norse god of thunder (to find out why she's looking for it, you'll have to play the game yourself – no spoilers here). Lara has a PDA that allows her to create a sonar map of the area she's currently in, and it also allows her to check journal entries to do some research on her current environment and the enemies within it, as well as how many hidden treasures and

relics she's found in each level.

The game's not perfect. There are a few minor bugs that crop up every once in a while, and Lara has a nasty habit of occasionally ignoring button presses. The combat feels a bit artificial, but the game can't really be faulted on this: combat is not the focus of the title; it's merely a fun distraction. We also encountered a few potentially game-breaking glitches where certain environmental triggers didn't fire off specific events in the game world, leaving us unable to finish a certain puzzle, and we were forced to load from a previous saved game in order to rectify the problem.

Problems aside, *Tomb Raider: Underworld* is just plain awesome. The game's new engine looks great, and you're guaranteed to see something that'll make your jaw drop at least once while you're playing. The puzzles and acrobatic sequences are often fiendishly difficult, but that rewarding sense of accomplishment when you manage to beat a puzzle is well worth it. It's not for everyone, but in our opinion, *Underworld* is an absolute must have. **NAG**

Dane Remendes

Any other Tomb Raider title, ever

Better Than



Raiding tombs

For Fans of



### Bottom Line

It's more Lara Croft and, therefore, more awesome.

**87**  
OUT OF 100

PC  
360  
PS3  
WII  
PS2  
PSP  
DS  
MOB





## GUITAR HERO WORLD TOUR

Dear Diary...

1 November 2008

Today I woke up with, like, an epiphany. I'm totally gonna start a band. Me and some guys from college are hooking up in my dad's garage after class to jam some tunes and see what we come up with. I reckon we'll start off with a few covers, like some Metallica, Tool and Ozzy - maybe even some old classics and stuff, and see where we go from there. It's gonna be epic.

3 November 2008

Dude, what a rush. We've all jammed before on the guitar, like on our own or maybe with a buddy, but getting together as a band was beyond rad. This time round, everything is just so much more fun to play. We managed to organise a gig at a local college party. Played a few country tracks and some classic rock, and we totally got approached by this dude who wants to be our band manager! He was all like 'You guys are awesome' and wants to organise like a tour or something. Man, I'm stoked.

12 November 2008

We've jammed a few gigs in the States - mostly at college parties and bars. Guess there're tons of places looking for a band as great as ours! After scoring some sponsorship cash to pay for our airfares, we're off to Europe to show those guys how a real rock band sounds. Our manager's been nagging me for ages to get a damn haircut and some new clothes, so I headed to the Rockstar Creator. It's, like, the craziest thing I've seen in ages - probably even more complex than the character creation in The Sims. There's the standard facial and clothing options (with tons of clothes to choose from; I'll even unlock more as I tour), a wicked layered tattoo system with, like, endless possibilities, and my personal favourite - the instrument customisation. We could build our dream guitar, bass, drums and even microphone from tons of interchangeable options.

28 November 2008

We've been on the move for a while now, rocking gigs from Times Square in New York to Ozzfest in Germany to some creepy church in Poland. The best thing is, while we were travelling, all these





## LOOKIN' GOOD

From the expectedly slick interface to the brilliantly motion-captured animations, *World Tour* is a cut above the rest. Hair bobs and flicks naturally, reflections glint off the instruments stylishly and everything looks slick where it needs to and grungy where you'd expect it. Each real-life character who's been digitally captured behaves as you'd expect on the virtual stage (man, Zakk Wylde is such a rock star) and you even have a number of moves to choose from for your custom rocker. Each gig location that you visit has been crafted in perfect detail – the impression further heightened by the presence of non-music sponsors like KFC. Worry not, though, it's mostly in the subtle, 'bucket o' greasy chicken lying overturned on the table' way than anything too in-your-face.



Famous dudes like Billy Corgan, Zakk Wylde and even Ozzy himself totally jammed with us. There are, by far, the most number of real-life characters on tour with us than ever before. They're getting a little weird though; we've gone to like ten different countries and they're still sticking around. I know we're cool but don't they have, like, better things to do?

20 December 2008

Our tour is winding down. I'm exhausted; been jamming for weeks. Between gigs I've been trying out the drums, bass and, when I've had a few drinks in me, the mic – the thing is, they're all great fun to play. The bass has this crazy thing where you've gotta, like, play without holding down any fret buttons. It adds a new take on the bass (which tended to get a little boring before) and works especially well in bass-heavy songs like Schism and Freak on a Leash. The drums are like a total workout, but once you've figured out how to keep the rhythm and you learn where your hands need to be in different songs, it's wicked good fun. I'm not really the singing type, but the few times I did venture that way I had a good time – the mic is responsive and has the habit of being unmerciful on higher difficulties (in my case, anything above 'easy').

Guitar Hero III

Better Than



Rock 'n' Roll, baby!

For Fans of



PC  
360  
PS3  
WII  
PS2  
PSP  
DS  
MOB

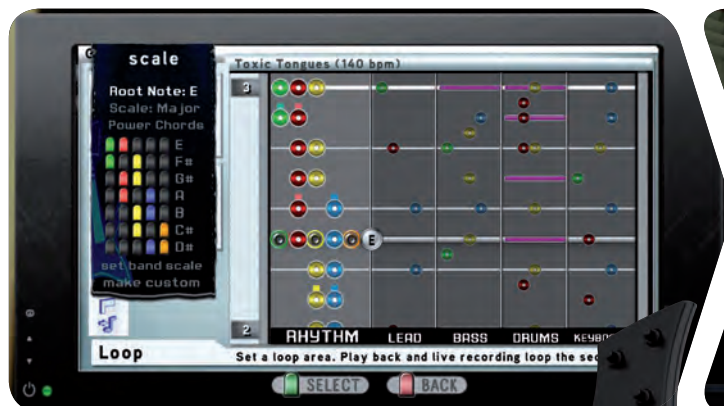


## Bottom Line

If you can put up with the somewhat lacklustre track list, *World Tour* will rock your world and everyone else's.







## STAR OF THE SHOW

Behold the **World Tour** guitar: This beauty has undergone an almost complete revamp, adding in a number of functions and improving a few others you might have had issues with.

### FRETS

These puppies are softer and more sensitive than ever before, but not much else has changed (thankfully).

### SLIDER BAR

The biggest new guitar feature in *WT* is the slider bar. It can be used during particular parts of many songs on its own by simply tapping the bar when you see the semi-transparent frets on screen, or as a replacement for the strum bar by tapping it in conjunction with normal fret usage. It can also be tapped or, erm, rubbed to create extra effects during a sustain (if you're feeling particularly awesome, try for the two-handed crossover using both the slider and whammy bar to maximise your rock stardom).

### STRUM BAR

Of the original features, the strum bar has been given the biggest makeover. It's now fitted with a small lip to aid in strumming and has been tuned in various ways to make it more comfortable to play. It's also a lot more 'clicky' than any of the previous guitars. While this helps with keeping rhythm, it is noticeably louder than what you may be used to.

### D-PAD CONTROLS

They're gone! Kind of. Instead of the traditional 4-way arrows, the D-pad has been integrated into the Guide (or PS menu) button to look like one of those nifty volume control dials found on real guitars.

### BACK BUTTON

You've always been able to activate the legendary Star Power with the back button, but it's sometimes easier to tilt the controller than fiddle around for a tiny button located in an arbitrary place. To combat this, the new back button is larger and easy to reach with the palm of your hand. Unleashing Star Power through tilting has also been set to a much lower sensitivity – something to ease those accidental activations.

### SHAPE AND WEIGHT

It's bigger, slightly heavier and simply feels better than any of the previous controllers. Smooth corners all over and two places to attach the strap help with left- or right-handed play. It really is a masterpiece.



## SENSITIVITY TRAINING

As a full-band package, the Super Bundle comes with one guitar, a microphone and the long-awaited six-piece drum kit. Unfortunately, despite the drumming in the game being absolutely great fun, the kits themselves tend to be a little quirky. While many users have reported no problems at all, a number of unhappy drummers have complained of unresponsive pads and, in particular, the cymbals. There are a few options for you if you happen to end up with a kit you're not satisfied with: return them, hit up Red Octane's support site for the official fix (which will require ordering a special cable from the developers), or perform DIY surgery with a few pieces of masking tape. None are ideal, and we're expecting an official fix to come with later versions, but they'll keep you going if you need to buy *World Tour* sooner rather than later.

## PICK 'N' MIX

Something likely to appeal to budding and veteran musicians is *World Tour*'s excellent recording studio. I'm no musician, so the recording studio and editing suite blew me away at first. Still, with some practice and patience, I managed to put together something decent enough in no time at all. You can drop in a bass and drum loop to help you along if you're just jamming on the guitar, or play all the instruments with a group of buddies and see where it takes you. Head into the mixing studio after you've rocked out a live, recorded session and fine-tune it from there. You can change all the instruments depending on the style you're going for (heavy metal, hip-hop, modern rock, etc.), lay down additional tracks and use the large variety of cutting and editing tools to create your perfect track. There are already tons of user-made tracks available for download through GH Mix. Some are quite fantastic, including a rendition of *Phantom of the Opera* and the *Final Fantasy* battle theme, but you'll have to slog through a few hundred crummy tracks to find the good stuff. Still, it's early days. I'm sure we'll see some real gems come our way, provided Activision doesn't clamp down too heavily on licence infringements.

## EASY LISTENING

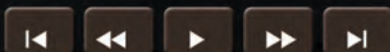
In any music game, no matter how great the implementation and presentation, ultimately the music itself will determine if you love the game or hate it. While many argue that the track lists in the *Guitar Hero* series have declined in quality from *GHIII* to *World Tour*, maybe not being exactly the sort of music they'd like to have in the game, it's easy to see why Red Octane has chosen the songs they did – they're mostly of the 'party music' variety. Tracks like *Living on a Prayer*, *Hotel California* and *One Way or Another* are the kind of tracks that most people will at least know the chorus and can tap their feet along to happily. Music like that makes the game highly enjoyable in a party environment, with your drunken friends singing merrily along behind you while you wail into the microphone, but they might get a little on the irritating side if you're just cruising through the career mode on your own. Since music is entirely subjective, however, your results may well vary – just be sure to check the box or an online link first for the full track listing (currently, Wikipedia's GHWT entry has the full track listing available for your perusal). Like its predecessors, *World Tour* will have a huge selection of downloadable content for you to customise your playlist more to your liking. Single songs from artists such as The Killers, Jimi Hendrix and Rick Springfield, three-song track packs (with a neat discount over the separate purchases) or entire albums are available. Worth special mention is the Metallica album *Death Magnetic*: if you've downloaded it for *Guitar Hero III*, the same download will work in *World Tour* – including the drum and vocal tracks. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows





PLAY



# ASUS G SERIES

## EMPOWERING YOUR GAMES



**asus**  
**G71** **asus**  
**G50**



### G71 SPECIFICATIONS

- Intel® Centrino® Processor Technology
- Genuine Windows Vista® Ultimate
- 17.1 WXGA+ Colour Shine LCD
- Core 2 Duo T9400 2.53G Processor
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DATE: 13 NOVEMBER 2008

"I've been spending a lot of time in the Middle East and random European locations with my buddies. We usually arrange little skirmishes with the locals for bragging rights. It actually reminds me a lot of playing multiplayer games back home. Now that my CO has given me the P90 to play with, I'm sure that tonight's matchup is going to be awesome. We're playing Crash tonight, the name the boys have given that battlefield where that cargo plane went down. Can't wait..."

**REZNOV:** He is responsible for the cold blooded murder of men, women and children...  
Not just here, but throughout the motherland.

DATE: UNKNOWN

"Okay, this is seriously weird. The last thing I remember was stroking my P90, happy with the increase to my performance that it brought (I was mowing those locals down like they were made of glass), when I heard the familiar sound of a grenade landing nearby... When I came to, this Japanese guy was leering over me, cigarette hanging out of his mouth. He was looking at me like I owed him something, but before I could ask anybody what was going on, a bunch of, well, I'm guessing they were US marines, showed up and unleashed all hell on those poor Japanese guys. They handed me this rickety old rifle and told me to shoot anything that wasn't speaking with an American accent. The guys looked like they meant business, so I didn't argue. I just took aim and..."

DATE: UNKNOWN

"I'm sitting in what I think is a commander's tent at the moment. Judging by the vehicles, weapons and uniforms of my new friends, I'm going to go out on a limb here and guess that I'm trapped in World War II. I'm not sure what's going on, but it doesn't feel very different from being back in my own time. Everything actually feels strangely familiar..."

## CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR

**THROUGHOUT THIS REVIEW ARE** notes that were found at the end of World War II on the corpse of a soldier (strangely, his brain appeared to have been chewed on...). We at NAG feel that his notes are fitting to the current situation that gamers find themselves in with the Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare versus Call of Duty: World at War debacle. Consider them as extra fleshy bits added to the review.

Let's make this simple, shall we? Take *CoD4*, revert from the more modern setting seen in that game back to the original World War II setting that the *CoD* series initially started off in, and you have *WaW* in a nutshell. The

only thing that's changed between titles is the developers. *Modern Warfare* was developed by series creators Infinity Ward, while *World at War* was developed by Treyarch, who previously handled *CoD3* (often considered to be the weakest title in the series). Thankfully, despite many worries that Treyarch would botch this attempt, they've actually done an outstanding job with this latest title. The single-player experience offers all of the token *Call of Duty* action that fans love, but to be honest, it's missing that 'spark' that made *Call of Duty 4*'s single-player campaign so unique and memorable. One thing that has also changed is the



difficulty: *WaW* has got to be one of the toughest *CoD* titles of the lot, thanks to the fact that Treyarch saw fit to have your enemies continually spawn until you've managed to push forward far enough on the battlefield to stop the spawn cycle. Be warned: this makes playing the game on Veteran difficulty (a setting that long-time fans of the series consider to be the only way to play a *CoD* title) nigh impossible.

The multiplayer component of *WaW* is also mostly identical to that of *MW*: persistent stats, locked weapons/perks and lots of dudes running around looking like trees. The weapons are all rickety WWII relics this time around,



The game is powered by the same engine that powered CoD4. The engine still holds its own and at times it's actually kind of creepy how life-like things look...

**DATE: 14 APRIL 1943**

"I guessed right. I am trapped in WWII. I can't believe this is happening. Everybody keeps calling me 'Miller' and Sgt. Roebuck's voice reminds me of this guy who starred in this TV show that used to air back in my own time. We're shipping out tonight, going to try and take Peleliu Island from the Japanese. Not sure how I'm going to get back home, but I have to keep trying. I miss my P90..."

**DATE: 30 JANUARY 1945**

"Met someone who shares my predicament! Russian guy named Dimitri, he says he also suffered a head injury back in 2008 and woke up in World War II. Sounds like he's had a rough time too, and he gave me a PPSH-41 as a gift for providing him with a shoulder to cry on. It reminds me of my beloved P90. He tells me that the Russians are going to be driving forward into the heart of Berlin soon to strike at the heart of the beast. This war should be over soon..."

**ROEBUCK: Banzai charge!**

One of the missions in the campaign sees you taking control of a tank and blasting Nazis, enemy tanks and water towers (blowing up scenery is always fun) into smithereens. Some of the multiplayer maps also feature tanks that can be hijacked and used to score a few frags.

**DATE: 2 JANUARY 1945**

"I've been stuck in this time for almost two years now. Starting to lose hope of ever getting back home, but I'm beginning to feel at home here. Sure, the weapons that we're being supplied with are a bit low tech compared to what I'm used to, but they're effective when they're in the right hands (mine). I've convinced the guys here to organise the same little friendly matches that we used to have against the locals back in Brzrkistan (or whatever it was called) and it's working out quite well. Our CO still gives us rewards when our team wipes out the locals, and we're getting some pretty decent loot out of it. It's a pity that our actual missions aren't as exciting as the ones I used to be a part of back home. They just don't feel as epic as all those special-ops missions that Captain Price and the rest of us used to go on... I miss Gaz..."

**DATE: 2 SEPTEMBER 1945**

"We've done it! The war is pretty much over! I'm meeting up with Dimitri in a few days for some drinks. We're working on meeting at an old airfield that we took from the Japanese back when I was still in Sgt. Roebuck's squad. Should be good to blow off some steam after all this..."

Shoot barrels like these and watch the fireworks as enemies lose limbs and bodies are thrown into the air.

This is the flamethrower. Use it wisely and it'll get you through some tough situations.

Games without cooperative Nazi zombie killing

Better Than

Call of Duty 4

For Fans of

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360

PS3

WII

PS2

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**Bottom Line**

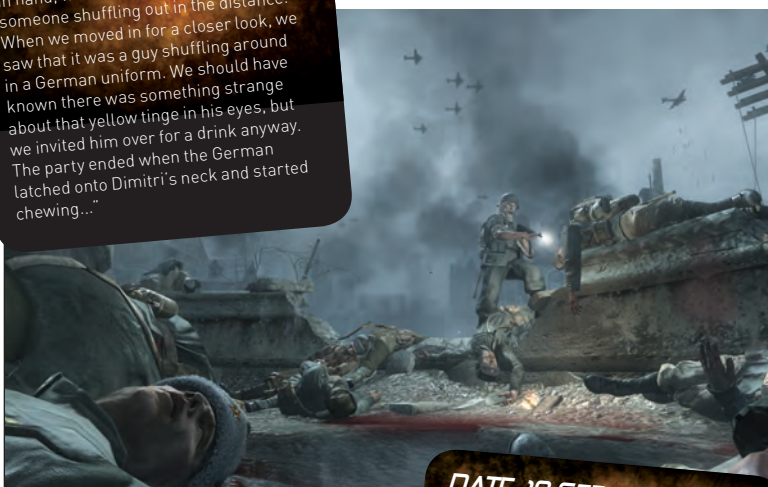
Nazis + Zombies = Awesome!





## DATE: 9 SEPTEMBER 1945

"Dimitri and I can't believe our bad luck. We were chilling at the airfield, beers in hand, when suddenly we spotted someone shuffling out in the distance. When we moved in for a closer look, we saw that it was a guy shuffling around in a German uniform. We should have known there was something strange about that yellow tinge in his eyes, but we invited him over for a drink anyway. The party ended when the German latched onto Dimitri's neck and started chewing..."



## DATE: 10 SEPTEMBER 1945

"We've been trapped here without sleep for over 24 hours now. 24! That was the name of that TV show! These things keep throwing themselves at us... these Nazi zombies... Thank the gods that Dimitri is here with me. I would've been a bloody corpse a long time ago if it wasn't for him. We've boarded up the windows, not sure when the next wave of those things will come..."



The briefing videos use a mixture of actual footage from WWII and some nifty animations. It's a nice touch.

JAPANESE EMPIRE

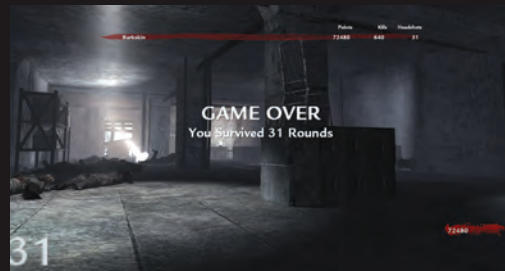
## DATE: 12 SEPTEMBER 1945

"Fatigue is starting to set in. Don't know how much longer I can hold out. They got Dimitri some time ago, ripped him clean in half. I can hear them clawing at the doors. I can hear them all around me. I suspect that this will be my last entry. I miss Kiefer Sutherland..."

Y 1942  
We're on  
Island...

## THE ZOMBIES

Once you've completed the single-player campaign in *WaW*, be sure to wait until the credits have finished rolling – there's a little surprise at the end. You're placed in a tiny room and given a pistol, with your only objective being to hold off wave after wave of... wait for it... Nazi zombies! You'll gain cash for killing zombies and repairing barricades that have been destroyed by the undead, and your hard-earned money can then be used to buy new weapons, ammunition and open other parts of the building. The zombies occasionally drop power-ups such as 'insta-kill' and a nuke that kills any nearby zombies. This game mode can be played cooperatively and is maddeningly addictive (that's an understatement). It's completely replaced *Quake* as the game most played game in our offices, and that's not to be taken lightly.



there are some new perks (and a few old ones with little extras added) and the maps are infinitely more detailed. The multiplayer remains incredibly fun and insanely addictive, so at the end of the day it all boils down to personal preference as to which title's timeframe you prefer.

The biggest addition to the series is the four-player cooperative play. Four players can join to fight their way through the single-player campaign (or the zombie level – see box out) and this brings a completely new dynamic to the series. There are challenges to complete that'll gain you XP towards your online profile as you play the cooperative campaign, giving players a reason to actually give it a go. It's a completely different ballgame entirely when you're working together to overcome the single-player obstacles with a few friends, and it's hugely satisfying when a team-based tactic pays off.

## THE REALITY

We're not sure anymore why we actually put the soldier's notes here rather than using the space to write a more in-depth review of *Call of Duty: World at War*, but we suspect that we went with it because there isn't much to say about *WaW*. It's essentially *CoD4* with a new skin. We've returned to World War II in this new outing, which some people may find discouraging, but the game remains fun and filled to the brim with action whether you're playing by yourself, cooperatively with a few friends or online against some friendly enemies. The single-player mode isn't quite as epic as that which we saw in *Modern Warfare*, but it makes up for it with Nazi zombies and cooperative play. If you loved the previous *CoD* title, then you'll have no problem with *WaW*. Happy hunting! **NAG**

Dane Remendes



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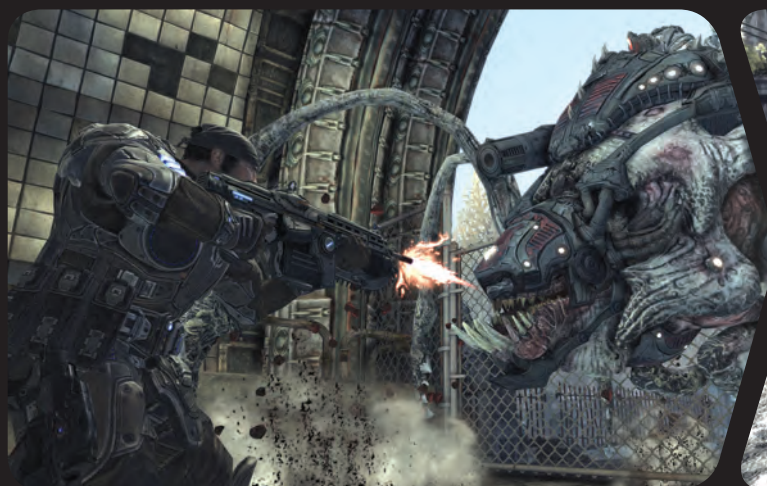
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## IT'S FUN TO SLAY TOGETHER

While *Gears of War* cannot compete directly with the rarefied air that the elite multiplayer first-person shooters occupy, it has carved out (insert chainsaw joke) its own niche as the king of the third-person online shooters. Well, it's one of the only ones, but let's not nitpick. The core online modes are relatively unchanged, but the big new draw is the Horde mode. Here, up to five players cooperate to take down waves of Locusts at timed intervals for score. Simple in concept, Horde ends up being one of the co-op game modes of the year.



# GEARS OF WAR 2

**I**N THE FUTURE, EVERY videogame will come in the form of an Epic Trilogy.

But the future, as they say, is now, and up rocks *Gears of War 2*, the second instalment in Epic's over-the-shoulder, third-person, 'action horror' shooter trilogy. The original *Gears of War* was the break-out 2006 console exclusive for the Xbox 360 that managed to take the shooter genre by the horns and wrest the spotlight away from even the mighty *Halo* franchise. Powered by Unreal Engine 3.0, *Gears* was a gory, visceral sci-fi romp that for all its standard components achieved a magic gestalt: the sum was greater than its parts. A new super franchise was born.

Know the score going into *GoW2*: The Locust Hordes, mysterious underground aliens of the planet Sera, are pushing human civilisation to the brink of extinction. *Gears*, the de facto space marines of the COG military, fight a desperate battle, aided by chainsaw bayonets and more man beef than three Arnold Schwarzeneggers bolted together. When we last left the fight, COG had detonated a device that supposedly scoured the Locust from their subterranean warrens. Six months later,

as our next game begins, we discover that it was a failure. The Locust are sinking entire human cities from below, with Jacinto, the last metropolis built upon thick bedrock, organising the final counter-offensive.

*GoW2* impresses with the massive scale of its opening cinematic sequences. The direction has improved: where *Gears* struggled to paint a picture of gritty warfare and often ended up feeling forced and at times unintentionally goofy, *GoW2* looks more genuine and the character dialogue rings truer. There are still moments when things get silly - and not by intent. Perhaps trying to write emotional scenes for characters that are modelled to look like a collection of tree stumps strapped into battle armour is an effort doomed to a certain measure of futility. Even so, there is more 'story' to *GoW2* and it's more meaningful. A lot of interesting details are dropped in incidental dialogue that serves to flesh out planet Sera to a surprising degree and, dare I say it, make you actually begin to care about the COG's struggle.

Enough about the story though. You're here for the shooting and the chain-







## SERIOUSLY 2.0

The UE3 engine was the reason why *Gears of War* looked so good, but also its Achilles' heel. At the time of the original game, UE3 just didn't scale that well to the Xbox 360: *Gears* was plagued by extensive texture pop-in, frequent frame rate stuttering, and an overall sluggish feel. The tweaked engine in *GoW2* is a revelation. Now it takes a truly mighty conflagration to result in a frame hitch, and dozens of enemy Locust may crowd the battlefield without a hiccup. Gone too is the worst of the texture fade-in. It can still be spotted on occasion, but it's not the glitch-ridden mess it was before.



sawing. In this, *Gears of War 2* doesn't disappoint. While it is in some ways purely an expansion of the original's play mechanics, every decision and refinement is sound. More so than any specific change to the weapon list, it is the overall flow of combat that has been carefully tweaked. The scale of battle scenarios is much larger. Enemies behave with more intelligence and self-preservation. Locust baddies are no longer ridiculous bullet sponges - it pays off to go for the headshot or the debilitating ankle hit. Enemies in the campaign now have the ability (and advantage) of recovering from a near-death stun, creating a new dynamic where it is not enough to merely shoot a Locust until he goes down. If you don't pay attention, you'll find those snipers you thought you took down revived by their comrades, just about the time they put a round into you where the sun doesn't shine.

And it's the campaign as a whole where *Gears 2* addresses the biggest shortfall of the original: it's just plain longer. *Gears of War* was a game that came to a halt just when it felt as if the story was beginning. No matter how

you sliced it, there wasn't a lot of meat on the bones of its campaign. *GoW2* is comprised of five acts, just like the original, but on average, they're longer and indisputably have a greater variety of situations. It does feel as if some things which could have easily been used as set pieces or an end cap to the saga have been intentionally left out (hello there, *Gears of War 3*), but it's a lot more satisfying this time around. Campaign co-op works as well, if not better, thanks to more team-based mechanics that require precise coordination between players that feels rewarding rather than cumbersome. Most of the time, at least, players are going to want a word with Epic about a particular sequence involving a large bomb - you'll see.

But the thing about *GoW2* is that it's one of those games you don't read a review of to decide whether you want to play it - you know you do. Rather, you come to see if you're going to be let down by the hype and your expectations. Read me now and believe me later: *Gears of War 2* doesn't disappoint. And yes, the chain-sawing is even better. **NAG**

Miktar Dracon

**NAG**  
MUST PLAY



Gears of War

Better Than



PC

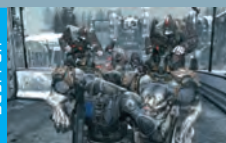
360

PS3

WII

Horde Mode

Best Part



PS2

PSP

DS

MOB

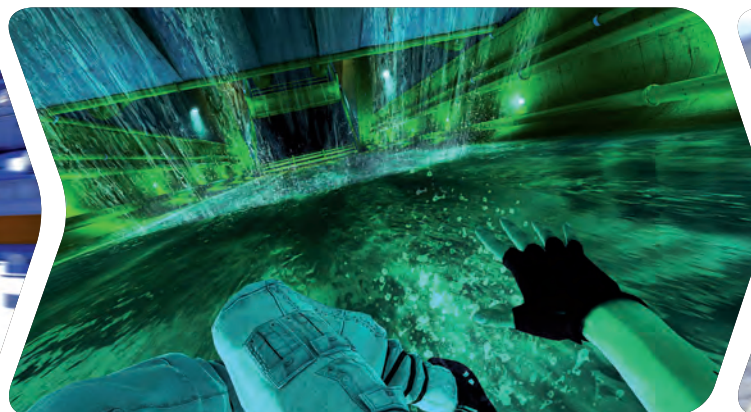


## Bottom Line

*Gears of War* times ten, plus toast. I like mine crispy.







## MIRROR'S EDGE

**E**XCUSE ME, WAITER? THERE'S some *Prince of Persia* floating in my First Person Shooter. What, this isn't a First Person Shooter, it's an Action Adventure? But it's got guns! Wait, so the guns actually slow me down and impair my movement? Okay, if you insist: I'll try to pretend this isn't a First Person Shooter, but I'm telling you the guns are going to confuse people. When you have a first-person view in a game, and a gun, people do the math, y'know... They start falling prey to genre conventions and gaming tropes, whatever those are. Wait, there's an achievement for beating the game without having shot anyone with a gun? Sure, let's give that a try...

### FIRST PERSON ACTION ADVENTURE PANTS

So, what we've got here is a shiny (and clean!) conformist dystopia where everyone's happy and nobody gets hurt. But, as tends to happen when everyone is happily conforming, some kids just don't jive with the overbearing government control. You play Faith, a Eurasian-looking "Runner" who certainly doesn't care for overbearing government control. The Runner *raison d'être* is to carry secret messages (probably porno magazines) while evading the

totalitarian government surveillance. Faith certainly isn't going to admit her personal hero is the Persian prince with the baggy pants, even though she borrows most of her moves from him. It's a good thing she knows how to wall-run, speed vault and wall-jump too, because when you're being chased by a helicopter across the metropolitan rooftops it's only one misstep that stands between you and a mushy fluid bag death on the pavement sixty floors down.

Runners are gifted with a special "vision" that colour-codes objects in the world. This helps you pick out a good path from point A to B, showing you where you can vault, leap, balance and zip line. The Runner Vision doesn't show you the optimal path however, that's up to you to discover (and half the fun of *Mirror's Edge*). On hard difficulty (unlocked by beating the game on Normal), the Runner Vision is enforced into the off position.

### MOMENTUM MANIA

Not to make too fine a point of it, but *Mirror's Edge* really is not a First Person Shooter. It's all about momentum, see. The longer you keep running, the more momentum you build up. This not only helps you move faster, but it lets you jump further, vault higher

**NAG**  
MUST PLAY

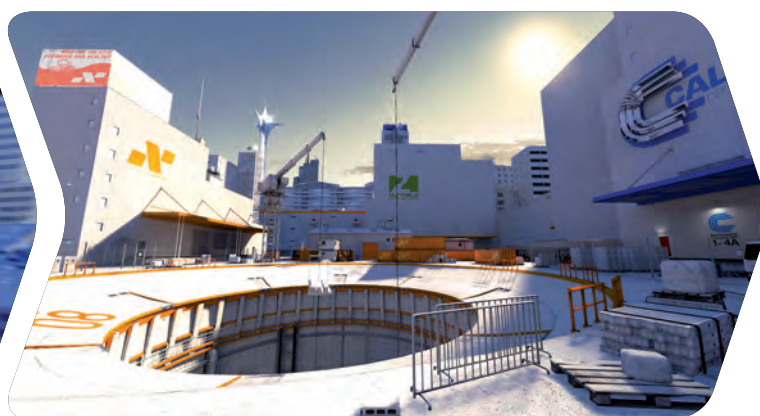


and recharges your Bullet-Time button for those tricky ass-clenching jumps across skyscrapers. It's all very exciting, different and the "presence of body" is undeniably cool. There is no HUD other than a reticle, there to help people stop puking all over their screens since there has never quite been a game with quite so much first-person motion in it before. While running, you can see Faith's arms, legs and feet. Climbing over things, ducking into a roll during a Heavy Landing and wall-running all show you the various body parts you would expect to see during such actions. It works incredibly well, though people prone to motion-sickness may want to try the demo first, just in case.

### RUNNING FOR FUN AND PLOT

The main storyline is presented in-game via some rather creative first-person cut scenes, as well as animated segments that give the experience a "graphic novel" feel. The plot itself, while certainly not Emmy Award winning material, does enough to keep you interested for the duration. In-between cut-scenes, the game presents the action across a variety of flavours. Certain segments are straightforward A-to-B running, which may or may not





involve something shooting at you. Other segments involve trying to find a good way to get through a bunch of Blues (Cops), either by avoiding them entirely, dispatching them with hand-to-hand combat or (gasp) by shooting them with their own weapons. Faith is a very capable combatant, especially when you mix movement and momentum into the attacks. Certain parts of a level are as simple as trying to ascend the inside of a stunningly beautiful and authentic-looking half-built skyscraper, picking the best route up. Finding the fastest route through all of these situations is really what *Mirror's Edge* is about once you unlock Speed Run upon completion of the game.

### SPORTY SPRINTING

*Mirror's Edge* is really about "gaming athleticism". Once you're done with the storyline (which will feel short since it's obviously the setup for a series, thus basically an extended training session akin to *Portal*), it's time to beat your personal best in terms of Time Trial or Speed Run (or the best of those on the high score list, either global or your friends). While the kind of score-attack self-competitive nature of games like *Mirror's Edge* certainly won't appeal to everyone, there remains a true joy

to finding an optimal, fast, graceful route through a section of a level in the Speed Run mode which times you on segments of the single-player campaign. Time Trial has a list of pre-built courses (usually based on the single-player levels), with additional courses unlocking as you rank either one, two or three stars on a level by beating a par time.

You can compete directly against other players by downloading their "ghosts" from the high score list. Their ghosts are ethereal red-tinted runners that leave a trail of footprints that you can follow, either to try to beat their time, or to learn a new route through a course.

### HAVE FAITH

Is it experimental and perhaps a touch niche as a result? Yes. There's no way around it: *Mirror's Edge* is something different and different doesn't always jive with the larger gaming group mind. There are going to be people who kvetch about it not having enough shooting bits. Others will complain about the length of the storyline, ignoring the Time Trial mode entirely since they care not for the competitive high-score attack thing. You can go hunting for Runner Bags in the levels, if you like your completion-ism with a touch of scavenger hunting, but that's

not for everyone either. *Mirror's Edge* is not for everyone, which is its greatest strength and it's most pronounced weakness. **NAG**

**Miktar Dracon**

For Fans of

Kinda Like

PC

360

PS3

WII

PS2

PSP

DS

MOB

**Bottom Line**  
Unique, graceful and will probably remain utterly misunderstood.

89

OUT OF 100





## MIDNIGHT CLUB: LOS ANGELES

**WHEN IT COMES TO** street racing games – you know, the ones where you flick a tricked-out whip around the streets, causing mayhem and running from the heat (sing it now) – there really is one name that immediately springs to mind: *Need for Speed*. But EA's street racer has had a few speed bumps thrown in its way of late, and the gap that has been created is being exploited by another series, this time from industry bad boys, Rockstar. Not that *Midnight Club* is a new series. This game has been around the block a few times, and has a steady following, although a more hardcore one. It's just never had the muscle behind it that *Need for Speed* has, and has always been in the shadow of that series.

*Midnight Club: Los Angeles* is the first trip the series is making onto the current console generation, and seems to be quite a delayed one at that. But the experience that Rockstar has gained with the new generation shows in this title, which is slick and beautifully presented.

One of the most striking aspects of the game, particularly for someone

who has managed to visit the city, is the representation of Los Angeles within the game. It's an 'abridged' version of the city (LA is just too big to put the whole thing in), but it features famous landmarks and, more importantly, almost perfectly captures the feel of the various areas and neighbourhoods of that vast metropolis. There is a wonderful familiarity in starting a race at the corner of Hollywood and Vine that makes the overall experience more real, despite the smaller 'geographical' scale of the in-game LA.

This is supported by a real-time GPS. At the press of a button, the player is zoomed out to an overhead view of the city (at the correct time of day and all). From here, the player can plan routes and find events (generally in the form of roving street races), but cannot 'jump' to locations. If you want to get somewhere in this game, you drive there. It's a nice thought, but does make the concept of 'getting a quick race in' pretty much impossible.

After you've found your intended opponent, a flick of the headlights indicates that the race is on. Most races start with an unmarked race

to the starting point (which can be skipped) before the real thing. Races come in a variety of flavours, and are demarcated with yellow smoke rather than obvious, unrealistic signs and lights [*and how is yellow smoke more realistic? Ed*]. It can get a little tricky at times, because the player is in no way prevented from veering off the track. Also, as the character's reputation increases, the markers become fewer and farther between.

The initial few races will frustrate anyone, because they are almost impossible to win. As a consolation, though, placing well still earns the player money and reputation. But the hope of earning enough money to stick a few modifications under the hood and nail opponents to the wall is short lived; the game makes use of an adjusting difficulty scale, meaning that no matter what you do, the races never get any easier. There is no peaking for the player in this game, and that is a bad thing: small goals and victories would have made things far more enjoyable.

Add to this the fact that virtually every race is won from behind [with cars easily pulling off faster than superbikes in the game – a





strange and very unlikely event [*much like the yellow smoke... Ed*], and the frustration factor just rises. It is an unforgiving title, despite being very good, and many people will give up in frustrated disgust.

Perseverance pays off, though, and the player who improves his/her own performance rather than that of the virtual car will reap the rewards that this game has to offer. It's not that modifying a car isn't fun – the system is robust and very complete, even letting the player alter the chosen vehicle's interior.

Another way to get reputation fairly quickly is through baiting the fuzz. In other words, do something wrong in front of a cop, and the chase is on. Outrunning them is the obvious choice, but the player can pull over and pay a fine – the longer the chase, the higher the fine. There is no fine for those who outrun the cops, but the catch is that these guys are vicious. And they're everywhere when the chase begins. Getting away from them can be quite challenging to say the least, and a late bust after a long chase will put your bank account in the red in very short order.

Aside from a merciless AI, *Midnight Club: Los Angeles* is a great game. The graphics are excellent, as is the sound, and the physics and handling of the cars feel good. You'll be 'power-sliding' through most corners, but these feel more controlled than they do in other titles. The control scheme is solid, and the overall package sets this one up very high in the racing game ranks. It feels far more authentic than the *Need for Speed* titles, with a living, breathing world full of people and chaotic traffic for the player to deal with (the realistically modelled vehicles can be modified just the way the player wants). This is a game that racing enthusiasts will enjoy, rather than arcade racer fans, although it still lacks some of the nuts and bolts aspects of more 'serious' racing titles. It is a game that requires patience, dedication and hard work to get through, and asks willingness from the player to improve their technique as well as their in-game vehicle. In short, it's an excellent racing game with a nasty streak a mile wide. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius

#### Need for Speed



Driving... really driving



As Good As

For Fans of



#### Bottom Line

A very good racing game.

PC  
360  
PS3  
Wii  
PS2  
PSP  
DS  
MOB







## FIFA 09

**H**AVING LONG PLAYED SECOND fiddle to Konami's *Pro Evolution Soccer* series, EA Sports' *FIFA* franchise finally came into its own with its 2008 iteration, and the developers continue their dominance of the genre with *FIFA 09*. Although not a great leap forward for the series, this year's instalment sees the introduction of a number of small refinements that make it the smoothest and most realistic soccer simulation around.

As one would expect of any EA Sports release, *FIFA 09* bears the official sanction of 30 real-world football leagues, with the English Premier League, German Bundesliga, Spanish Primera Liga and Italian Serie A, among others, being fully represented. With the introduction of the new Adidas Live Season feature, the game will even adjust its player statistics based on teams' real-world performance by downloading updates from the Internet.

The developers claim they've introduced upwards of 250 refinements to the core game dynamic, and though you'd be hard-pressed to single these out individually, they combine to make the most fluid and realistic *FIFA* experience to date. Ball physics have been refined, animations are more lifelike and, for the first time, the physical size of the players influences how the game plays, with bigger players noticeably jostling smaller players for possession. The AI has been

improved too, and it's not uncommon to see computer-controlled strikers signalling to you before they make a run, helping you to set up successful plays.

The 'Be a Pro' mode makes a return in a more fleshed-out capacity. It once again puts you in control of a single character, giving you the option of choosing a real footballer or creating your own, and then playing through four consecutive seasons, all the while earning experience points and rising through the ranks of your club team, with the eventual goal of representing your country in the World Cup.

The game also gives you greater control over your team's tactics, allowing you to create a variety of different strategies, tweak them to your liking, and map them to the D-pad for quick selection during matches. The Manager Mode also makes a return, and although it doesn't quite stand up to *Pro Evolution Soccer's* Master League, it's still an interesting enough diversion. Visually, the game is crisp, running without any stutters, with character animations that look more fluid than ever. A solid soundtrack and convincing effects back up the commentary of Andy Gray and Martin Tyler who, though hardly electrifying, are relatively competent. Additional commentary packs are also available for download from the PlayStation Store.

*FIFA 09* is a polished and well-refined

soccer simulation that simply oozes class. It's enjoyable, realistic and has enough depth to put itself firmly ahead of the competition as the best game in its genre at the moment. **NAG**

Adam Liebman

**NAG**  
MUST PLAY



Pro Evolution Soccer

Better Than

The beautiful game

For Fans of

PC

360

PS3

WII

PS2

PSP

DS

MOB

\$

🌐

🎮

Bottom Line

Thoroughly polished and realistic, *FIFA 09* is unarguably the best soccer game currently available.

85

OUT OF 100





Safehouses provide a moment of respite, for restocking weapons, ammo, health kits, and your trousers



## LEFT 4 DEAD

**T**HE CORRIDORS ARE CHOKING on the detritus of panic, the walls and floors blotted with unfinished paperwork and gore. Here and there, patients wander about in dull-eyed torpor, their fingers tracing listless silhouettes on overturned desks. Around a corner, something howls into the stifling air, its outrage muted by the splintered doors and rotting bodies between us. Bill reloads his shotgun and sucks on a cigarette. "Hunter nearby," he drawls, his eyes narrowing against the gloom. Moments later, a hooded figure bursts into view, clearing the passageway in a single lunge to pin Francis to the ground, desperately tearing at his face with grimy fingers. Their deceptive indifference promptly abandoned, the errant patients turn on our group, fury twisting their bodies into sudden and extraordinary exertion. Disorder erupts from every doorway, as Mercy Hospital's previously flawless health and safety record takes another hard hit. This zombie apocalypse stuff really sucks for staff morale, and Betty down in Human Resources would be pitching an apoplexy if she weren't already smeared most of the way across her office.

Okay, so technically they're not zombies, but rather the luckless casualties of a virulent, psychosis-inducing weapons-grade strain of rabies... but whatever. They look like zombies, and that makes them zombies in my Big Book of Contingency Plans.

So anyway, these zombies have overrun just about everywhere, leaving those left mysteriously unspoiled by the pandemic to their own devices in the midst of the rubble of civilisation and a relentless, prowling host.

*Left 4 Dead* offers players the chance to live the Zombie Apocalypse Dream with three friends in an all-out extravaganza of Molotov cocktails, mostly unidentifiable grisly bits, and an enormous, lumbering testimonial to the dangers of steroid abuse. Working together (which mostly involves not inadvertently killing each other with careless shots), players must negotiate a series of monster closets disguised as a hospital/airport/small town/rural farmland, and find rescue. Driven by an ingenious artificial intelligence dubbed "The Director," the game adapts dynamically to players' progress, becoming increasingly difficult or lenient according to their changing circumstances. Enemy boss characters and supply spawns, for example, are never quite the same between plays through, depending entirely on context.

Everything is presented with the sort of inimitable verve and class we've all come to expect from Gabe and his pals over at Valve Corp., and the only real gripe I can level at the game is the lack of content. The game ships with just four scenarios, each of which plays out in 45-90 minutes. While the procedural narrative and additional versus multiplayer mode allow for a reasonable number of



replays, the limited settings and enemy types become a bit "been there, shot that" quickly. If their content model behind *Team Fortress 2* is anything to go by, however, we can probably look forward to magnanimous rollouts of free add-ons over the next few months. Until then, however, *Left 4 Dead* feels a bit skimpy.

**NAG**

Tarryn van der Byl

28 Days Later: The Video Game

Kinda like

The real thing

As good as

PC  
360  
PS3  
WII  
PS2  
PSP  
DS  
MOB

Bottom Line

Visit interesting places. Kill zombies. Accidentally cripple your teammates with friendly fire.

87 OUT OF 100



# SPIDER-MAN: WEB OF SHADOWS

**A**CTIVISION'S SPIDER-MAN RELEASES, AFTER the high point that was *Spider-Man 2*, have hit somewhat of a slump of late, with the web-slinger's last two outings being particularly disappointing. Developers Treyarch and Shaba Games redeem themselves to a degree with *Spider-Man: Web of Shadows*, but it still fails to live up to the legacy of some of its predecessors.

The game opens in a New York City that is being devastated by a massive symbiotic invasion. The city lies in ruins with squads of S.H.I.E.L.D. agents trying desperately to rescue any survivors, while Spider-Man searches frantically for Mary Jane. When he eventually finds her, she makes some cryptic remarks that allude to *Spider-Man* himself being responsible for the current state of affairs, before the game cuts back to four days before the incident. It's not a masterpiece of story telling, but it's an interesting enough setup that motivates you to find out exactly how things went so terribly awry for the city.

The game places a greater emphasis on morality than any previous Spider-Man title, giving you access to both Spider-Man's typical red suit, as well as the symbiotic-augmented black suit. Each suit has slightly different attacks and combinations available, and choices you make throughout the game will give you experience points that can be used to unlock additional capabilities for the relevant suit. You'll also be able to call on allies to help you. If you've aligned yourself with the 'good' red suit, heroes like Luke Cage or Wolverine will show up to help you out. If you're playing on the darker side, you're more likely to enlist the aid of such dubious characters as Black Cat or The Vulture. It's an interesting addition, and your choices do affect the ultimate ending of the game, but unfortunately there just aren't enough practical differences to the game dynamic between the two suits to make this ethical quandary as important as it could have been.

The controls are generally tight, making swinging through the city a fairly fluid experience, though occasional graphics clipping issues do disrupt the flow of the game. Combat is fairly enjoyable, with some

very well-animated combination attacks available. More spectacular attacks can be unlocked by spending experience points, and although they're impressive, they don't feel altogether any more effective than Spider-Man's basic attacks.

The other major problem plaguing *Web of Shadows* is that although you have access to the whole sprawling city, the missions you're given quickly become tedious and repetitive. For the most part, objectives simply involve defeating legions of a certain type of enemy. It's nowhere near as varied as we've seen with earlier games in the series, and it detracts from the fun.

*Web of Shadows* is undoubtedly more entertaining than either *Spider-Man 3* or *Friend or Foe* was. It does well to provide a feeling of freedom appropriate to the character, as well as featuring some entertaining combat sequences and especially boss fights. It's just unfortunately a little too lacking in variety to remain entertaining. **NAG**

Adam Liebman

Spider-Man 3



Spider-Man 2

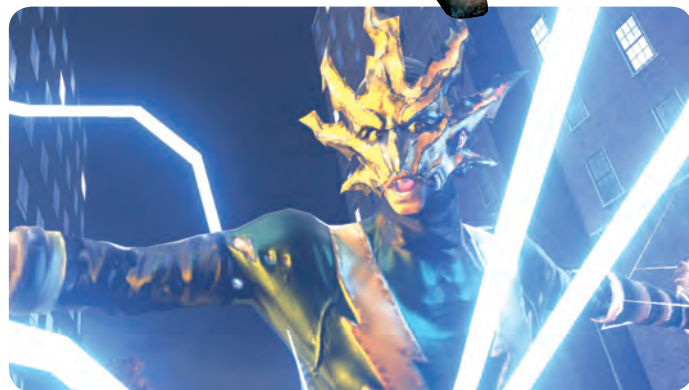


## Bottom Line

Spider-Man's latest outing is better than his last, but too tedious to lift itself from mediocrity.

65  
OUT OF 100

PC  
360  
PS3  
WII  
PS2  
PSP  
DS  
MOB



What do you mean you've got cobwebs down there?!





## QUANTUM OF SOLACE: THE VIDEO GAME

**WHEN ACTIVISION TOOK OVER** the licence to develop Bond videogames, they also undertook to improve on what has been done before. This, frankly, is not the most difficult undertaking ever – the Bond games were not bad for movie-based games, but they were still movie-based games. This means that, when compared to titles not driven by the mere presence of a well-known licence, they didn't deliver in terms of quality.

And so, Activision's first Bond-based game, *Quantum of Solace: The Video Game*, had a big promise to live up to.

And it almost did. It's not a bad game. In fact, for a movie-based title, it's pretty damned good. But it still has the feel of a movie game. It doesn't transcend that stigma enough to make anyone sit up and say "Wow." Still, it's a definite step in the right direction, and the game's shortcomings could be put down to the inexperience that the developer has with the subject matter. Not that we're dealing with an inexperienced developer here. The team behind this title is Treyarch, and anyone who knows their videogames will be able to tell you that this team has been there and back a few times.

Treyarch predictably used the *Call of Duty* engine to power this game, which takes the player through selected events of the latest 007 movie, as well as through a few from the previous film, *Casino Royale*. Most of the action, equally predictably, is presented in first-person view, although Treyarch took a

few opportunities to show off their modelling skills in terms of Daniel Craig by switching to third-person views at various times.

One of these occasions is when they player makes use of the game's cover system, an addition to the familiar engine. When the player takes cover, the game shifts to third-person view, and the player can either blind-fire at enemies, or take riskier, aimed shots. It's a nice system, but the game uses it far too often, and the result is a break in action in which should be a frantically paced game.

There is also a balance system, which sees Bond uncharacteristically carefully treading along narrow surfaces and then a hacking system, which uses simplistic, rhythmic button presses to get through. None of these is wonderful. A unique 'split screen' system, with one view showing Bond and another showing the view of the guy he is trying to sneak past, is quite nice, but under utilised. And finally, the unarmed takedown system is fun for a while, but the animations get a bit repetitive.

It is fun to play, though, and worth experiencing if you can look past its faults. An unforgivable one, though, is that the game is quite short. Still, it's an enjoyable way to kill a few hours and a few international bad guys.

*Quantum of Solace: The Video Game* is still a movie-based game, but it is a good one. If the trend established by Treyarch

in this title continues, the next game in the series should be much better, and the one after that awesome. Time will tell on this one. In the meantime, *Bond* fans will probably get a kick out of *Quantum of Solace*, but it is one of those titles that should be tried before buying. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius

Previous Bond games

Better Than

Worse Than



Call of Duty 4

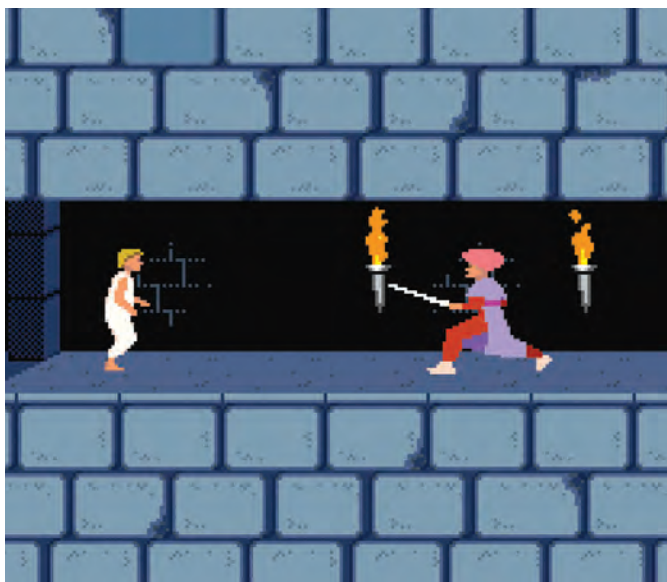
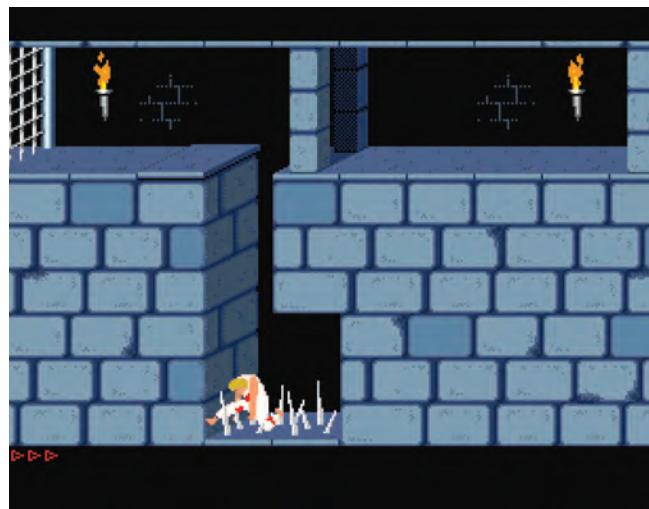


Bottom Line

A good attempt, but it could have been better.

75  
OUT OF 100





# PRINCE OF PERSIA

## LIVE JOURNAL

### Oh, boohoo, being a princess sucks!

(pretty\_princess989) wrote, @ 11:34:08 on 17-10-612 BC

"Daddy is off to war again, and that ghastly Grand Vizier of his has wasted no time in turning his most lusty attentions to me. If only the abominable man weren't such a slave to Disney stereotypes. :[

Anyway, just this afternoon, I spotted one of those foreign tramps from the market climbing the palace walls. Of course, I fell in love with him immediately. Oh, his beautiful shining hair! I do wish he'd come and sweep me up in his arms, and we'd be happy for, like, ever and ever! My heart aches for him, though I do not know his name, or what he likes, or anything whatsoever about him. I'm sure he's perfect, though. ^\_^^

**Help!** (pretty\_princess989) wrote, @ 17:42:12 on 18-10-612 BC

"OMG, that vile, reprobate Jaffar has just

usurped Daddy's throne! Daddy is going to flip. He's also demanded that I marry him, and has given me an hour to decide. Help, I'd rather die. But I'd even rather that nice foreign tramp negotiate through thirteen floors of an almost implausibly treacherous palace dungeon full of pit traps, wobbly floors, and crushing metal jaw gate things to rescue me. I'm a princess, damn it, and I simply must be rescued! :[

I've dispatched my favourite mouse, Cheesy Choppers, to seek aid."

**Post tagged by (pimp\_king\_jaffar):** "LOL! You're mine now! PS: I put down rat poison."

*Prince of Persia* must be one of the most widely ported games ever developed. After originally appearing on the Apple II—back in 1989, the nice foreign tramp's dungeon excursion was subsequently released on PC, Amstrad CPC, Amiga, Super Famicom, TurboGrafx-16 PC Engine, Game Boy, Game Boy Color, SNES, Atari ST, ZX Spectrum, Macintosh, Game Gear, SEGA Mega-CD, SEGA Mega Drive, and even the somewhat

obscure SAM Coupé. In 2007 and 2008, a revamped version of the game by Gameloft, packing a shiny new coat of HD gloss and some new tumbles, was released onto the Xbox LIVE Arcade and PlayStation Network respectively. **NAG**

## DUNGEON RUNNING AND TREND SETTING

*Prince of Persia* was the first videogame to use rotoscoping\*, an animation technique involving tracing over live-action still frames to produce fluid, lifelike movement. The game's sole developer, Jordan Mechner, recorded hours of footage of his brother running and jumping about in baggy white pants to provide the resource material. We can only assume he had to use his imagination when it came to animating the character's unlucky demise on the wrong end of pointy sharp spikes of death. Or perhaps David Mechner simply vanished mysteriously one afternoon.

\* Rotoscoping is an animation technique in which animators trace over live-action film movement, frame by frame, for use in animated films. – Wikipedia

~ All screens from the Amiga version





# HAF 932

## TURBULENT AIRFLOW

Built with three gargantuan 200mm fans, meshed with the Cooler Master patented airflow exterior, HAF 932 will blow you away. The massive airflow design and rugged steel body is sure to keep your valuable components safely tucked and well cooled for maximum performance. This lean mean gaming machine is ready for battle. Are you?





## TECH NEWS

**WELCOME TO THE TECHNOLOGY** news section. This section will focus on 'hot' technology trends and innovation. We'll scour the Internet, use information sent to us via e-mail, and use our well-placed 'spies' in the industry to bring you the hottest tech news of the moment. We'd like your input as well, and any relevant comments can be sent to [letters@tidimedia.co.za](mailto:letters@tidimedia.co.za). Kindly note, because NAG goes to print about two weeks prior to on-shelf date, some of our news may be old hat by the time you receive or buy your magazine. That's unfortunately the way the industry works, and we apologise in advance. Please remember, a magazine is only as good as its readers want it to be, and our duty is to keep you up to date with what you deem important. So let's get to the important business of hardware and technology, shall we?

## AMD MAKING A COMEBACK?

**WHEN IT COMES TO** desktop processors, the AMD Phenom series of processors hasn't been too phenomenal, but AMD hopes to turn that around in the months to come. AMD recently invited some key members of the press to take a look at Phenom II. This processor has been known under the code name "Deneb" for many months now, but Phenom II is what the processor will be launched as.

In terms of overclocking, in the past, most Phenom processors hit a wall at -20°C, but with Phenom II, this wall has been removed - AMD ran a Phenom II X4 processor overclocked to 6GHz at 1.95V at below -190°C!

It seems that AMD Phenom II processors are on the right track, and when they launch during CES in January, it will mark a new chapter for AMD when it comes to processors. The new Phenom II processor is designed to be run on the Dragon platform. The Dragon platform will consist of a Phenom II processor, a



Radeon HD 4000 series graphics card and an AMD 790GX chipset-powered motherboard.

Core i7, you may be the champ now, but Phenom II is after your crown.

## FASTEST CONSUMER PC EVER

**HOW DO YOU BREAK** the world record in the benchmark that many consider the de facto metric of overall CPU performance, SPEC CPU2006? You get a bunch of hardware wizards at YoYoTech in the UK to build you a PC that can take on many of today's supercomputers. Meet the Fi7epower MLK1610, YoYoTech's R45,000 beast, which recently became the fastest ever personal computer in the world - and still is. At the heart of this amazing system beats a Core i7-965 Extreme Edition clocked to 3.73GHz. The system's 'backbone' is ASUS's P6T motherboard, which is based on Intel's new X58 Express chipset, and is the first MBO to support NVIDIA's SLI and AMD's CrossFire multi-GPU graphics platforms. To make optimal use of the Core i7's HyperThreading technology, the Fi7epower MLK1610 packs 9GB of high-performance Corsair Dominator DDR3 RAM clocked at 1,866MHz, in a triple-channel layout. The operating system (Vista

Home Premium 64 Bit) boots up blisteringly fast, thanks to the system's 80GB Intel X25-M solid-state primary drive. For storing data, the MLK1610 sports a very fast 1TB Samsung SATA 3Gb/sec HDD. Graphics are taken care of by an HIS Radeon HD 4870 X2 GPU with 2GB of ultra-fast GDDR5 memory, and the system's housed in a sleek Cooler Master HAF 932 Chassis.

And the performance? In SPEC CPU2006, it blew away a hideously expensive system powered by an exotic eight-core UltraSPARC processor that scored 85.5 points in the peak integer-rate test. The Fi7epower MLK1610 ran circles around the UltraSPARC, scoring 130! It also broke the record for the peak floating point rate test, with a score of 88.3. The fact that the SPEC CPU2006 test takes no less than three days to complete, speaks volumes about the stability of this Fi7epower.

For more information, visit [www.yoyotech.co.uk/](http://www.yoyotech.co.uk/). We like... We want... We're jealous!



## SAPPHIRE KEEPS ON INNOVATING

**SAPPHIRE'S NEW HD 4850 X2** comprises two HD 4850 GPUs on a single PCI Express card, connected by an on-board PCI Express Generation 2.0 bridge chip. Each GPU has 1GB of GDDR3 memory (giving the card a total of 2GB of on-board memory), 800 stream process units and a 256-bit memory interface. The HD 4850 X2 sports four dual-link DVI outputs. On a suitable PCI Express Gen. 2.0 CrossFireX mainboard, it is possible to use



two SAPPHIRE HD 4850 X2s in CrossFireX mode, setting a new standard in performance and gaming.

The SAPPHIRE HD 4850 X2 incorporates the latest ATI AVIVO HD technology for enhanced video display, and features a second-generation built-in UVD (Unified Video Decoder) for the hardware-accelerated decoding of Blu-ray content for both VC-1 and H.264 codecs, as well as MPEG files, reducing CPU load by massive margins.



# HARDWARE Q & A

## Subject: Reverse Overclocking

"Overclocking delivers better performance right? Wrong, according to Crysis Benchmark and Fraps. When I OC my CPU from 2GHz to 2.4GHz, my fps in 3D games rapidly DECREASE, but when I do the opposite and bring it down to 1.6GHz my frames rapidly INCREASE. Here's my specs: Intel E2180 Powercolor X1550 2GB DDR2 Foxconn Mobo I know you guys have the potential to assist me with this problem. Loyal NAG Fan [Carel Mulder]"

**NAG:** There could be a number of reasons why this happens. Unfortunately there's no way of knowing without being in front of the actual PC. It seems as if your PC could be throttling at the higher frequency, either because of heat, lack of power or a combination of the two. It is also common for this to happen if the CPU is not receiving enough power, and it may throttle itself. Try turning off C1E or EIST in the BIOS and see if that helps the situation.

## PETASCALE COMPUTING ON JAGUAR

**T**HROUGH A CLOSE, FOUR-YEAR partnership between ORNL and Cray, Jaguar, a 1.64-petaflop supercomputer, has delivered state-of-the-art computing capability to scientists and engineers. The XT system has grown in strength through a series of advances since being installed as a 25-teraflop XT3 in 2005. By early 2008, Jaguar was a 263-teraflop Cray XT4 able to solve some of the most challenging problems that could not be solved otherwise. In 2008, Jaguar was expanded with the addition of a 1.4-petaflop Cray XT5. The resulting system has over 181,000 processing cores connected internally with Cray's Seastar2+ network. The XT4 and XT5 parts of Jaguar are combined into a single system using an InfiniBand network that links each piece to the Spider file system.

Jaguar is the most powerful computer system for science, with world-leading performance, more than three times the memory of any other computer, and world-leading bandwidth to disks and networks.

For more information on this 'wild cat', visit <http://www.nccs.gov/jaguar/>.



## VIEWSONIC WIDESCREEN GAMING MONITOR

**T**HE VIEWSONIC 22" VX2240W widescreen gaming LCD features a two millisecond video response time and large 16:10 native aspect ratio. Advanced Amplified Impulse™ technology and 1,680x1,050 pixel resolution also provide HD broadcast-quality. A built-in Kensington security port provides an additional deterrent against theft.

## ANATOMY OF A REVIEW

A quick guide to the NAG Hardware Reviews section



## DROP YOUR ROCKS AND READ THIS BOX

**SPEC-TACULAR:** This is where your buddy hooks you up with the nfo, yo.

**SCORE:** Gold-star treatment, only the best for our hardware.

SPECS	
CORE	R680 x 2 (857MHz)
PROCESS	666 million gates x 2 (55nm TSMC)
MEMORY	256-bit 512MB GDDR3 x 2 (900MHz)
ROPS	16 x 2
SHADERS	320 x 2
SCORE	
★★★★★	

## NAG AWARDS

**DREAM MACHINE:** We have a dream. That only the best hardware gets this hot chick, waving her derriere in the air like she just don't care.

**HARDWARE:** Ever wonder why it's called hardware? If something has this award, then someone got hard for the ware.



## HARDWARE SCORING SYSTEM

Our hardware scoring system is based on the reviewer's expert opinion. The scale is from 1 to 5 with no fractional values. Each number has a specific meaning, described below. Most products will score 3 or 4, with the occasional 5 or 2, and almost never 1. Note that a high price alone can never lower a score below 3.

- 5 The stuff of Legends. Buy it while you can, we probably already have.
- 4 A good deal; worth it if you're shopping for one.
- 3 About what you'd expect, no problems. You might want to wait for it to go on sale.
- 2 This has some issues. You should probably shop around for something else if possible.
- 1 The stuff of Nightmares. You'll probably be sorry you got one, even if it was free.

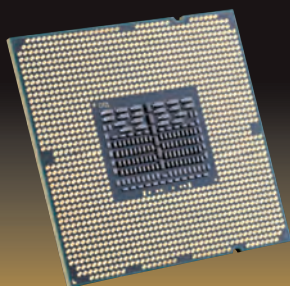
## THE STUFF OF DREAMS

A new addition to the hardware reviews presents itself in the form of a "Stuff of Dreams" boxout. When a product has deemed itself worthy of our Dream Machine award, we think you should know why the previous title-holder got booted out and replaced with something even hotter. The table shows the Champion (old) and the Challenger (new) - we're sure you can work the rest out for yourself.



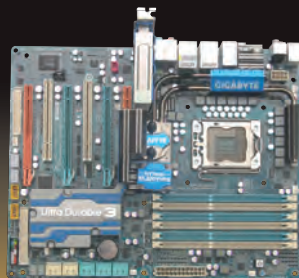
# DREAM MACHINE

A new year brings with it a new dream machine dance from our two lovely pole-dancing ladies. This month sees five of our dream machine award winners in 2008 make way for some hot new products! In no particular order, we present to you the GIGABYTE EX58-Extreme, the IKONIK VULCAN 1200 WATT PSU, the Intel Core i7 Extreme 965, the Microsoft SideWinder X6 Keyboard, and finally the Logitech G9 Laser mouse. Feast your eyes on the best of the best ...



## PROCESSOR

Intel Core i7 Extreme 965 (\$1,300)  
Intel Corporation [011] 806-4530



## MOTHERBOARD

GIGABYTE EX58-Extreme (TBA)  
Gigabyte



## GRAPHICS CARD

SAPPHIRE HD 4870 X2 (R6,400)  
Frontosa [011] 466-0038



## MEMORY

Corsair TWIN3X2048-1800C7DFG (R4,699)  
Frontosa [011] 466-0038



## CASE

Cooler Master Cosmos S (R1,818)  
Sonic Informed [011] 314-5800



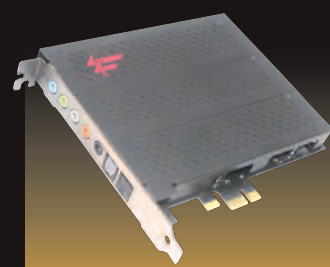
## STORAGE

WD Caviar SE16 500GB (R755)  
Drive Control [011] 201-8927



## POWER SUPPLY

IKONIK Vulcan 1,200W PSU (TBA)  
IKONIK



## SOUND

Creative X-Fi Titanium Fatal1ty (R1,799)  
Creative



## MONITOR

Samsung SyncMaster T260 LCD (R5,499)  
Samsung 0860 726 7864



## KEYBOARD

Microsoft SideWinder X6 (R859)  
Microsoft



## MOUSE

Logitech G9 Laser (R999)  
Logitech [011] 656-3375



## COOLING

Coming soon: No compatible cooler  
currently available



# ASUS EAH4870 TOP

# 109% Speeds!

## World's First Factory O.C. HD4870 for Astounding Visuals!



Graphic buffs that have been clamoring for more speed can now put their hands on the new ASUS EAH4870 TOP/HTDI/512M graphics card. This powerful graphics card utilizes the ATI Radeon™ HD 4870 GPU for outstanding 109% GPU speeds; and provides support for DirectX 10.1 special effects for the ultimate gaming visuals.



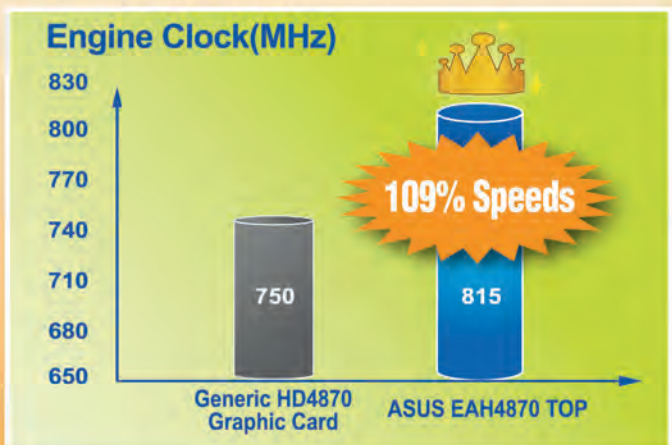
### 109% GPU Performances

As the world's first overclocking version for the EAH4870 Series, the EAH4870 TOP/HTDI/512M lets you experience GPU and memory clock performance boosts from 750MHz up to 815MHz and 3.6GHz up to 3.7GHz respectively. This generates an astounding 3DMark Vantage Extreme Preset score of 3733 - providing you an astonishing 109% GPU performance for that extra graphical "oomph". With such sheer gaming performance, you can now experience much more for all your gaming needs - only with the ASUS EAH4870 TOP/HTDI/512M.

### HD Gaming/Video with Break-through Performance

The ASUS EAH4870 TOP brings about the power of graphical "supercomputing" to gamers - setting new standards for visual computing. Equipped with the new TeraScale graphics engine, fully immersive and cinematic gaming experiences will re-define how you play your games and take HD gaming to a brand new

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▲ ASUS EAH4870 TOP Provides Enhanced GPU Performances





by Neo Sibeko

# My Ultimate Rig! (Part 2)

**L**AST MONTH, I DETAILED what, to me, would be the best LGA775 platform if I were to build a dream machine. This month, I'll be looking at a machine with the exact same purpose but built on the X58 platform.

This may seem like an easy thing to do, as one just replaces components with the relevant X58 compatible hardware, but this is not the case. These components not only have to be compatible, they have to work well together well beyond their rated specification. To make matters worse, there currently isn't a water block for the i7, at least not one that I have tested personally. So the system is relegated to air cooling for the CPU, which changes many things about the build. The most obvious one is CPU clock speeds are going to be lower than they should be, by anything between 100MHz and 300MHz. This is a significant sacrifice in CPU performance, but for the sake of stability, a prime stable overclock is what is needed.

Although I may not be able to liquid-cool the CPU, the option to use this cooling method is still available for the graphics cards and it is employed in this build; however, we are now cooling three graphics cards instead of two. Yes, the 4870X2 has two GPUs, but each one only needs one block, so this time the build has an additional loop, and should an i7 CPU water block become available it will gain yet another loop.

## Motherboard: GIGABYTE EX58-Extreme (F3 BIOS)

It's early days for the X58 platform, but the GIGABYTE EX58-Extreme has set itself apart from the competitors by not only being easy to overclock, but having plenty of options for extreme overclocking in the BIOS.

## CPU: Intel Core i7 Extreme 965 at 4.0GHz (167x24)

The 965 CPUs are so different in overclocking headroom that one would have to bin the parts to find the right one. Some are not capable of making the 4GHz mark on air, while some will go above the 4.3 GHz mark - it all depends on the sample... A safe bet, however, would be 4GHz, especially given the cooling constraints.

## RAM: 6x1GB OCZ PLATINUM DDR3 1800MHz (2.05V @ 1,800MHz CL7-7-7-21)

The best DDR3 memory available in the country, and maybe in the entire world, as this memory has validated and finished 3D benchmarks at 2,133MHz CL7-7-7-21 1T @ 2.27Volts. Nothing I've seen or used is even close to matching this memory. With more relaxed timings on the i7 platform, similar speeds can be achieved to what is possible on the LGA775 platform.

## Storage: Intel X25 80GB SATAII SSD + 2X WD Caviar Black 1TB Drive

There's no beating the Intel Solid State drives for outright performance, as they are literally limited by the SATAII interface. This incredible speed negates the need for a separate scratch file drive, and the two WD Black series 1TB drives provide top performance and high reliability, and obviously plenty of storage.

## VGA: EVGA GEFORCE GTX280 FTW EDITION (750MHZ/ 1,200MHz on all three cards)

Now that we finally have SLI on an Intel Chipset, SLI can really come into its own on the most powerful platform available currently. It may 3x8-lane 3-way SLI, but it's PCI-Express 2.0, so the interface bottleneck is not as bad as one would imagine. Where performance is concerned, this configuration not only offers Hardware PhysX acceleration, but better performance in every title than 4-Way Crossfire, despite having a lower theoretical performance.

## PSU: IKONIK VULCAN 1200 WATT

We would have gone with the same unit as the previous build, but this unit outpaced the Odin in almost all spheres. Better 12-V rails, software control like the Odin, but this unit has 3-way SLI support and better power efficiency.

## Monitor: SAMSUNG SyncMaster T260

The best-looking monitor I have ever had the pleasure of working with. There may be bigger monitors out there, but this one is just right and the quality is spectacular.

## Cooling: Swiftech Triple Radiator (MCR320), Thermalright Ultra 120 extreme (CPU), Pump (MCP655), Reservoir (MCRES Micro Rev2), three VGA Blocks (MCW60)

Only the best cooling components are used and, best of all, they are readily available from several online stores. Once again, the cooling makes the entire machine possible.

## Chassis: IKONIK RA-X10 SIM

Not the cheapest case around, but you get what you pay for. The build quality is incredible, and the attention to detail is incredible. Best of all it looks brilliant and has plenty of room to fit all the components.

As with the previous machine, this configuration is both enthusiast and gamer friendly. While this may not take any new 3DMark2K1, 03 or 3DMark05 records, it is better than the LGA775 machine in 3DMark06, Vantage, PC Mark, Wprime and SuperPi. Game performance is improved as well with hardware accelerated physics, which is soon going to become very important as more titles make use of the power of multi threaded CPUs to produce more lifelike interactions in the game world. 3-Way SLI also happens to deliver the highest game performance available in any title, to date beating out the 4 GPUs in 4-Way Crossfire configurations. There is also some untapped performance in this machine, as soon as there's a water block for the cooling system we used, the CPU should have some more speed left in it. As to which is the better machine between this one and the previous month's build, 3DMark Vantage would pull out a P28,000 score, while 3DMark06 should be the same if not a little lower.

Next month I will look at the AMD platform, hopefully with the PhenomII and the Dragon platform. If that doesn't excite you, well news is that the CPUs have no cold bug (operate at -195°C) and have reached north of 6GHz under Liquid Nitrogen as well... AMD just may be back with a vengeance! **NAG**



These components not only have to be compatible, they have to work well together well beyond their rated specification. To make matters worse, there currently isn't a water block for the i7.





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## Reviewer's Diary



by Derrick Cramer

# Sounds like trouble

**A**N OFT NEGLECTED ASPECT of the PC hardware world, audio related components tend to be last on the list of potential upgrades, because really now, how much can audio affect anything? Well... Gone are the days of cream Mecer OEM speakers that came bundled with your PC, gone are the days of flimsy headphones, and gone are the days of onboard sound. Things are done properly now, and if they aren't, they should be. This month, we get personal with a look at headphones and why you should spend a huge amount on them.

Last year, after dealing with my fourth broken set of headphones in as many weeks, I decided enough was too much already. I had a trip to the UK coming up and had one main focus: meet the Queen. Unfortunately, her royalness was too busy to have a spot of tea with me, so I had to settle for headphone shopping. A set of Sennheiser HD415s caught my eye, and while they weren't the HD280s NAG had suggested, they looked good, and fit my modest budget. A couple of quid down, I made my way back home to see why I gave up a 500GB hard drive for headphones.

Unpacking revealed the small features that just screamed quality. The thick, extra-long cord, the gold plated connector with screw-in adapter, the super-aural (no idea what this means, presumably that it sounds good) headphones themselves, every bit going further to reassure me that this was money well spent. And boy was it ever! A year later, despite many attempts by light-fingered friends, they're still on my desk, still in perfect condition, and, most important of all, still sounding like their hefty price tag. Music has been transformed, sounds that were hidden before now make their appearance, as if they had been waiting for the quality to arrive. Games come alive, more than once did I lose myself in *CoD4*, just stopping and listening to the ambient noises, the rustle of the grass, the rattling fire somewhere far off in the distance, the impact of the bullet meeting soft fleshy bits – it all makes sense now. Developers spend countless hours working on a game's audio, and we ruin the experience of the game with low quality audio outputs. Then we have the audacity to complain about the lack of immersion?

While I may not be an audiophile just yet, a dedicated sound card will soon be replacing my onboard audio, coupled with

an external audio amplifier that has a proud place next to my pc. Eventually, even the HD415s will be replaced with something of even higher quality, a set of HD595s, perhaps. All this, however, comes with a price tag higher than most current gaming PCs, and seems a waste when I could use the money on 3TB of space, a second 4870X2, a 1.2kW PSU, or a 26 inch LCD monitor. And while all this sits on my list, it all comes second to the audio upgrades. Surprising, no?

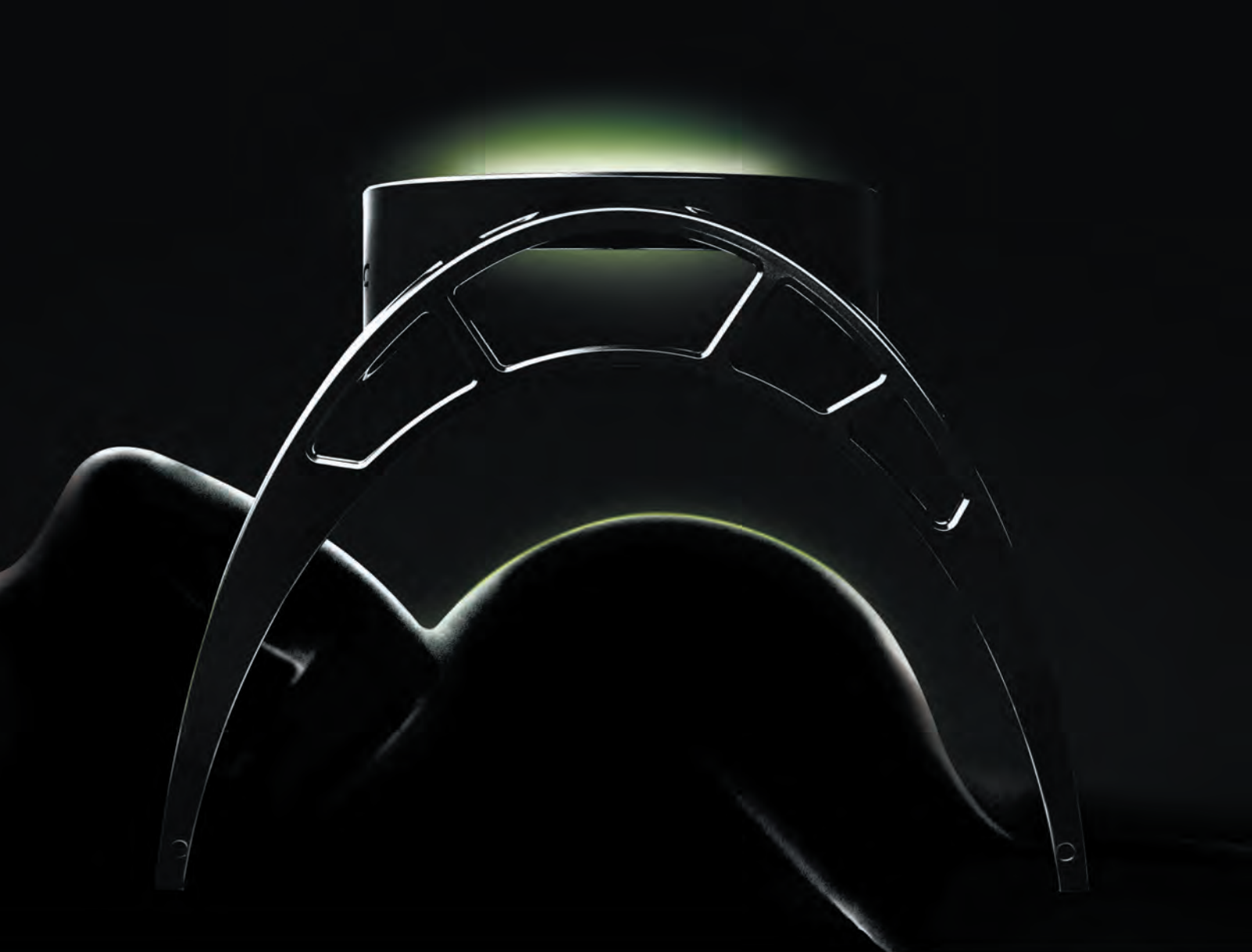
While there are many technical aspects as to why decent-quality headphones are better than their cheap brethren, rambling on with a set of numbers is not really useful when it can all be summed up in one sentence, "It just sounds better." Try headphones out, just like test driving a car: the experience counts far more than the numbers that state why the experience is good. The verdict is simple: if you have a budget planned for an upgrade to your PC, and you can do without the extra 500GB of torrents you plan on downloading, headphones should be top priority, they're far more versatile than a speaker set, can be used while the spouse/parents sleep, can be taken to LANs, and above all, are worth it. Oh, and on a side note, the audio equalizer on your PC should be set to rock – it makes everything sound better, trust me. **NAG**



I had a trip to the UK coming up and had one main focus: meet the Queen. Unfortunately, her royalness was too busy to have a spot of tea with me, so I had to settle for headphone shopping.







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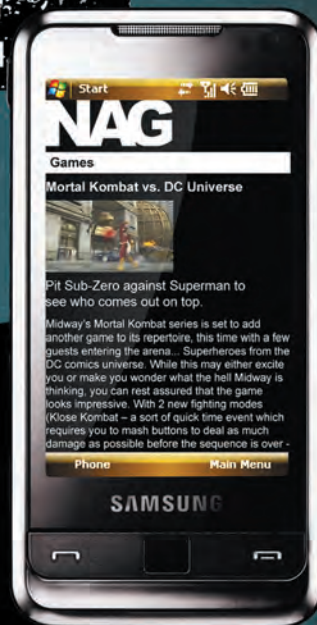




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# DREAM MACHINE SHOOTOUT INPUT DEVICES

Go to any LAN and take a quick survey of the keyboards and mice that people are using and you'll probably find seven out of ten people are using Logitech products. That shouldn't come as a surprise, because Logitech makes some of the finest gaming input devices on the market. Recently, Microsoft launched two new products to challenge Logitech's market dominance: the SideWinder X5 mouse and SideWinder X6 keyboard. To see how they stacked up, we ran them head-to-head against Logitech's gaming stalwarts: the G15 keyboard and G9 Laser mouse.

## LOGITECH G15 KEYBOARD

**RRP:** R 1,118

**Supplier:** Logitech [011] 656-3375

**Website:** [www.logitech.com](http://www.logitech.com)

**Brand:** Logitech

**Star Rating:** 4/5

**WE FIRST REVIEWED THE**  
Logitech G15 back in

September 2006 when it was released. It was replaced by a newer version in 2007, but it's debatable whether this was an improvement. From an aesthetic standpoint, the G15 is not a terribly attractive keyboard. It looks like it would be at home on the bridge of the Battlestar Galactica, the 1970s version. The orange backlight looks a bit drab compared to the blue LED of the original. The brightness of the backlight can be adjusted or turned off completely at the touch of a button.

They key layout also has a few shortcomings: particularly, the left shift key is too small and there is an extra "I\`" key crammed in where the rest of the shift key should be. This is incredibly annoying when you're trying to sprint away from an enemy in an FPS and you accidentally press a useless key. The keys themselves are very tall and have a long keythrow. In its favour, the G15 was one of the first keyboards to include a switch that disabled the annoying Windows Start Menu key.

The G15 was one of the first keyboards to introduce programmable macro keys for frequently used commands in games. There are six "G" keys that can be programmed into three separate banks, giving you a total of 18 macros. The macro keys can be programmed through the keyboard's software or in-game

using the quick-record button.

The main party piece of the G15 is the built-in LCD screen on the top of the keyboard. Some games natively support the LCD and will display information such as health, ammo and items. Unfortunately, not enough games support this feature to make it more than a gimmick.

The G15 is a fine gaming keyboard, but its age is beginning to show, and at R259 more than the Microsoft X6, it's in desperate need of a price cut.



### SPECIFICATIONS:

**Minimum Requirements:**

**Operating System:** Windows XP/Vista

**Connection Port:** USB

**Macro Keys:** up to 18

**Media Keys:** yes

**Warranty:** 1 year



# MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER X6 KEYBOARD

**RRP:** R859

**Supplier:** Microsoft

**Website:** www.microsoft.com

**Brand:** Microsoft

**Star Rating:** 5/5

**M**ICROSOFT'S LATEST SALVO INTO the gaming keyboard wars is the new SideWinder X6, and right off the bat, this keyboard gives the G15 a run for its money. This just might be the most intimidating-looking keyboard ever made. If Batman were to build himself a gaming rig, this would be his weapon of choice. There is a pair of large, easily accessible knobs protruding from the top of the keyboard: one controls volume and the other adjusts the intensity of the ominous-looking red backlight.

The keys are comfortably laid out on the board and have a low profile in contrast to the G15. The keythrow feels somewhere between that of a conventional keyboard and a laptop. On most conventional keyboards (the G15 included) there is a slight ridge on the "F" and "J" keys to aid with touch typing. In a nod to gamers, Microsoft has moved that ridge onto the "S" key to help your left hand find the proper position for an FPS. There are also additional backlights on the WASD keys.

Like the G15, the X6 supports macro keys that can be programmed through software or on the fly. But instead of six keys, the Microsoft keyboard has 30 keys (each key on the number pad can have a function assigned to it) and three different memory banks, giving it a total of 90 macro keys. Like the G15, the Start key can be disabled on the X6. We have two minor niggles, though: the "Esc" key is positioned above the column of macro keys

on the left of the keyboard instead of directly above the "~" key. Also, this keyboard has no feet at the back, so it lies very flat on the desk, which takes a little getting used to.

Those problems are more than made up for, though, by the X6's number pad, which can be attached to either side of the keyboard. This may seem like a gimmick, but it's incredibly useful if you want to take advantage of all those extra macro keys without taking your hand off the mouse. Alternatively, if you want a little extra space on your desk, just remove it entirely.



## SPECIFICATIONS:

**Minimum Requirements:**

**Operating System:** Windows XP/Vista

**Connection Port:** USB

**Macro Keys:** up to 90

**Media Keys:** yes

**Warranty:** 3 years

# LOGITECH G9 LASER MOUSE

**RRP:** R999

**Supplier:** Logitech [011] 656-3375

**Website:** www.logitech.com

**Brand:** Logitech

**Star Rating:** 5/5

**W**HERE A GAMING KEYBOARD is a weapon of mass destruction, the mouse is more tailored for a surgical strike. Logitech's top-of-the-range instrument is the G9 Laser mouse, and the power and precision of this product is unparalleled. The G9's sensitivity can be adjusted from 200 to 3,200 DPI and can be changed up or down on the fly via a switch beneath the left-mouse button. Preset levels can be assigned through the mouse's software.

The G9 comes with two different interchangeable grips to suit different hand sizes. The larger grip has a smooth finish, while the smaller one has a rough texture that supposedly makes it less likely to slip in your hand, though we didn't find too much difference in performance between the two textures. The G9 also has a cartridge at the back which allows you to add up to 28g of extra weight if you prefer a heavier mouse. The mouse wheel can be adjusted between a click-to-click and a frictionless scrolling style.

Through the profile manager software you can adjust the G9's button assignments, keyboard macros, DPI settings, USB report rate and even the LED colour. Up to

five profiles can be stored in the mouse's on-board memory, meaning you can move your G9 from one computer to another (or reinstall your system) and retain all of your settings.

All of this ammunition comes at a price, though; it costs over R300 more than its Microsoft rival. If you don't think you need all the features the G9 offers, read on.



## SPECIFICATIONS:

**Minimum Requirements:**

**Operating System:** Windows XP/Vista

**Connection Port:** USB

**Image processing:** 6.4 megapixels/second

**Resolution:** 200-3,200 dpi

**Tracking Speed:** 45-65 inches/second

**Response Rate:** 1,000 reports/second

**Weights:** up to 28g

**Durability:** 8 million clicks



### FEATURE: Dream Machine Shootout: Input Devices

**Star Rating:** 4/5

The X5 is quite a bit larger than the G9 as well. While you control the G9 primarily with your fingertips, you can rest your entire palm on the X5. If you're used to a conventional mouse, the SideWinder can feel a bit awkward to begin with, but after about a week with each mouse, we found the X5 the more comfortable of the two. We also found the two vertical side buttons much more accessible than the



This is a fantastic mouse, maybe just not as fantastic as the G9, but at R629 you're still getting a lot of mouse for the money. **NAG**

**Minimum Requirements:**  
**Operating System:** Windows XP/Vista  
**Connection Port:** USB  
**Image processing:** 7,080fps  
**Resolution:** 400-2,000 dpi  
**Tracking Speed:** 45 inches/second  
**Response Rate:** 500 reports/second  
**Weights:** No  
**Durability:** 10 million clicks

	Logitech G9	Microsoft SideWinder X5
Layout		X
Quality	X	
Aesthetics	X	
Price		X
Extras	X	
Verdict	X	

	Logitech G15	Microsoft SideWinder X6
Layout		X
Quality		X
Aesthetics		X
Price		X
Extras		X
Verdict		X

The logo for the video game "Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe". It features the Mortal Kombat dragon head logo at the top, followed by the text "MORTAL KOMBAT" in a bold, yellow, blocky font. Below that is "vs" in a smaller font, and "DC UNIVERSE" in a stylized, italicized font with a blue and yellow color scheme.

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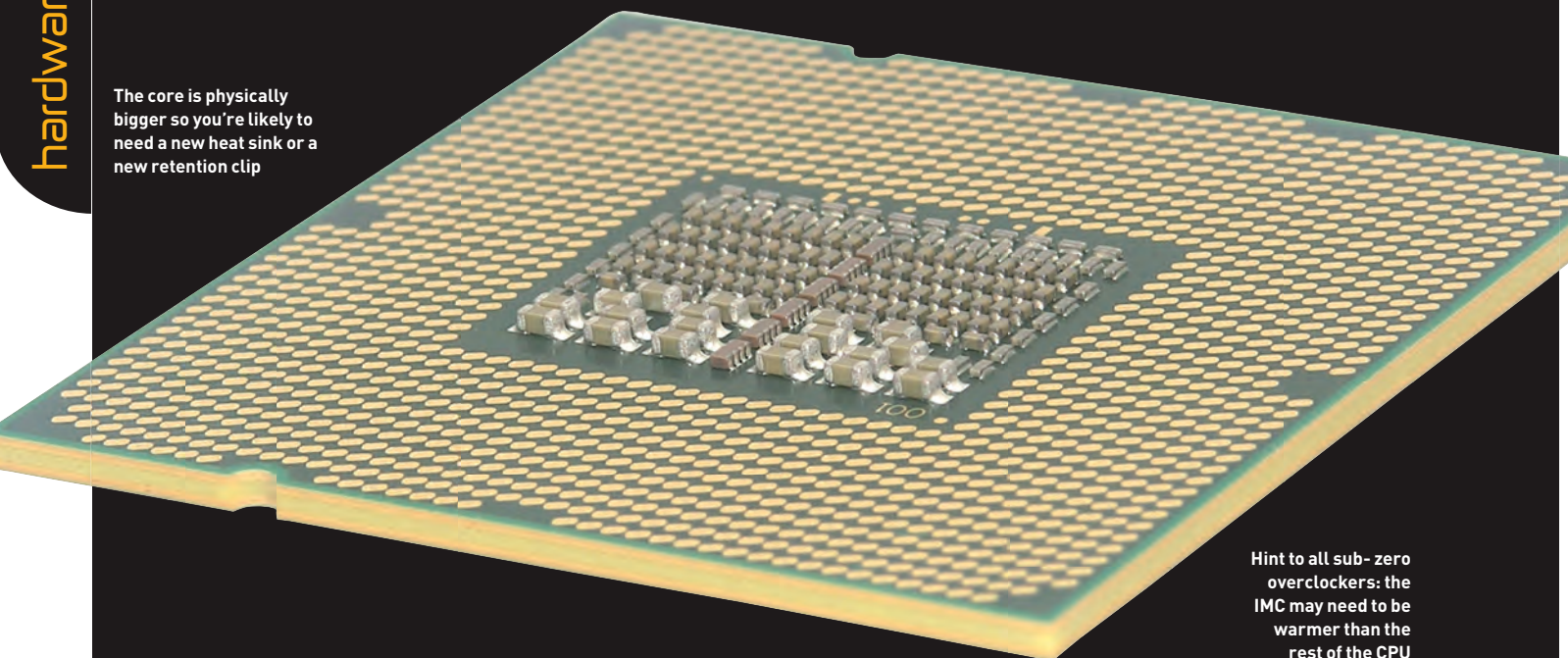
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The core is physically bigger so you're likely to need a new heat sink or a new retention clip



Hint to all sub-zero overclockers: the IMC may need to be warmer than the rest of the CPU

## INTEL CORE I7 EXTREME 965

**NEHALEM IS FINALLY HERE.** We've been hearing about it for some time, but it has finally arrived and it is indeed impressive. Without a doubt, it's the fastest x86 CPU available on the market today, and probably the fastest single socket CPU available for any platform today.

What may surprise many is that the biggest changes in the CPU, besides the physical differences, are the architectural changes, which are quite significant (see our feature on page 96 in last month's issue). Besides all the technicalities of the CPU, the most important thing about this CPU is performance. The 965 model operates at 3.2GHz, just like the outgoing Intel Core 2 Extreme X9770, but the difference in performance is staggering. This is particularly true in games, be they multithreaded or not. The i7 965 delivers performance usually 10% to 20% faster than the X9770, which is plenty, considering that the clock speeds are identical.

There are many contributing factors to this, but the most obvious contributions are the integrated DDR3 memory controller, the 8MB of L3 cache, wider execution units, better branch predication, the return of Hyper-threading and far better inter-core communications through Quick Path Interlink (QPI). The system is similar to what AMD has been using for several years now, actually since the advent of the Athlon 64 CPU. However, QPI operates at a higher frequency and delivers more bandwidth than what is currently available on the AMD platform on the AM2 socket.

So how does the 965 perform in synthetic tests? Well, very well, actually. This is right across the benchmarks from the old ones to the latest tests, especially in the two Vantage tests that are inherently multi-threaded. These particular benchmarks may exaggerate the Core i7's advantage over the previous generations multi core

CPUs; however, the synthetic numbers prove to be more than academic as video encoding proves that hyper threading speeds up video encoding significantly, and together with the integrated controller and other technologies, allow the i7 965 to deliver twice the performance of the 9770 in some instances.

In single threaded tests like Super Pi and Wprime, the i7 is significantly faster than the outgoing processors, sometimes up to 10% more efficient than the Penryn-based CPUs in these single threaded applications. This is particularly useful because the i7 CPUs, despite what some Intel engineers insist on, do not overclock as well as the last generation CPUs. For the enthusiast or the gamer who has pushed their current CPU quite far, the clock efficiency advantage of the i7 may not be enough to offset the frequency advantage their current CPU has. While a 4GHz i7 965 is impressive in any application, a 4.56GHz X9650 is just as impressive, and in some situations may be a little faster. So the value of the i7 at present will depend largely on what system you are currently running.

Our particular sample was not a fantastic overclocker; in fact it was amongst the poorer samples available. However, it is worth mentioning that was a very early engineering sample which is very sensitive to which motherboard it is installed in. Maximum clock speeds using an air cooler were around the 4.1GHz mark, while -75°C temperatures only managed to improve the clock by 400MHz, which isn't much when you consider that X9770 CPUs improve by anything up to 1.2GHz. With that said we have no doubt that overclocking on the CPUs will improve with better revisions and as the core gets process improvements.

We would usually not concern ourselves with professional application performance

### STUFF OF DREAMS

	Champion: Intel Core 2 Extreme X9650	Challenger: Intel Core i7 Extreme 965
Speed		X
Temperature		X
Verdict		X

**NAG**  
HARDWARE



**NAG**  
DREAM  
MACHINE



when reviewing a CPU, however, the i7 shines here more than it does in the game benchmarks. This is particularly important for Intel, as the competition was still beating them in specific server space tests, but with the Nehalem architecture, Intel has improved significantly in this space, and as a result, we as the consumers have gained performance in our favourite games and programs. Without question, and once again, Intel has produced the fastest CPU money can buy. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

### SPECS

CORE	Nehalem
NUMBER OF CORES	8 [4 Physical+ 4 Logical]
PROCESS	45nm High-K
CACHE	4 x 32KB Instruction Cache, 4 x 32KB Data Cache, 4 x 256KB L2 Cache, 8MB L3 Cache
FREQUENCY	3,200MHZ

### SCORE







## TOSHIBA QOSMIO X300

**F**OR MANY PEOPLE, HIGH-END gaming laptops, or desktop replacements as they're often called, fall quite firmly into the "for that price, they better work" bracket. How does one justify spending upwards of R20,000 on a laptop with little battery life, four kilos of bulk and a screen big enough to rival many proud desktop gamers' setups, and how do manufacturers justify building the device and charging that price for it? It's quite simple, really. By putting together a machine that offers excellent specs and performance to match, complete with a collection of genuinely useful extras and quality build components, it suddenly becomes quite easy to justify the price Toshiba is asking for the Qosmio X300.

When one first looks at the Qosmio, its glaring flame motif and candy-red colour scheme shout out that this is a laptop for those who like to show off. Everything about it, from the 'brake lights' above the keyboard and 4-speaker Harman/Kardon setup (excluding the surprisingly-meaty subwoofer hidden underneath) to the smudge-loving piano black finish and sheer size of the device tell the world exactly how much money you've just spent on this machine. Some may like the look, and while it's not really for me, the important thing is performance, and that's where the Qosmio shines.

We put the machine through its paces in *Far Cry 2*, *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*, *CoD: World at War* and 3DMark 06 – purely for comparative purposes. While it only managed to nab a score of 6998 in 3DMark, it's the games that really count – 3DMark clearly isn't too impressed with the 9700m GTS with only 48 stream processors and all-round low clockspeeds of 530/1,325 and 256-bit memory speed of 1,600MHz. When it comes to the games, however, the Qosmio surprised by performing smoothly in *Far Cry 2* at mixed high to extra high settings at the 17" screen's native resolution of 1,680 x 1,050 in DX10 mode, even managing an average frame rate of 16 with the settings fully cranked up. As one might expect, both *CoD 4* and

*5* sailed smoothly at maximum settings without too much AA, only seldom dipping below the 30fps threshold required for trouble-free gameplay.

Unfortunately, the battery life didn't fare nearly as well as the frame rate, managing to squeeze out only 20-30 minutes of game time. When you're using a device like this, however, battery life really shouldn't be a concern – chances are that you'll have the machine plugged in wherever it goes. Additional features like HDMI output, eSATA and some impressive cooling might help encourage you to strain your wallet just a bit further if you're in the market for a high-end laptop.

Ultimately, a combination of budget and requirements will determine whether the Qosmio is suitable for you. If you're after a powerful, portable PC capable of handling anything you throw at it, and which will be as comfortable on your office desk as it is on a trestle table in a hall with a thousand sweaty LANners, you cannot go wrong with the Qosmio X300. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows

### SPECS

<b>CPU</b>	Intel Core 2 Duo P8600 2.4GHz
<b>MEMORY</b>	3GB DDR3 1,066MHz
<b>VIDEO CARD</b>	NVIDIA GeForce 9700m GTS 512MB
<b>DISPLAY</b>	17" WXGA+ TruBrite
<b>STORAGE</b>	320GB SATA 3Gb/sec
<b>OPTICAL DRIVE</b>	DVD/RW Multi Drive
<b>OPERATING SYSTEM</b>	Windows Vista Home Premium 32-bit

### SCORE



hardware

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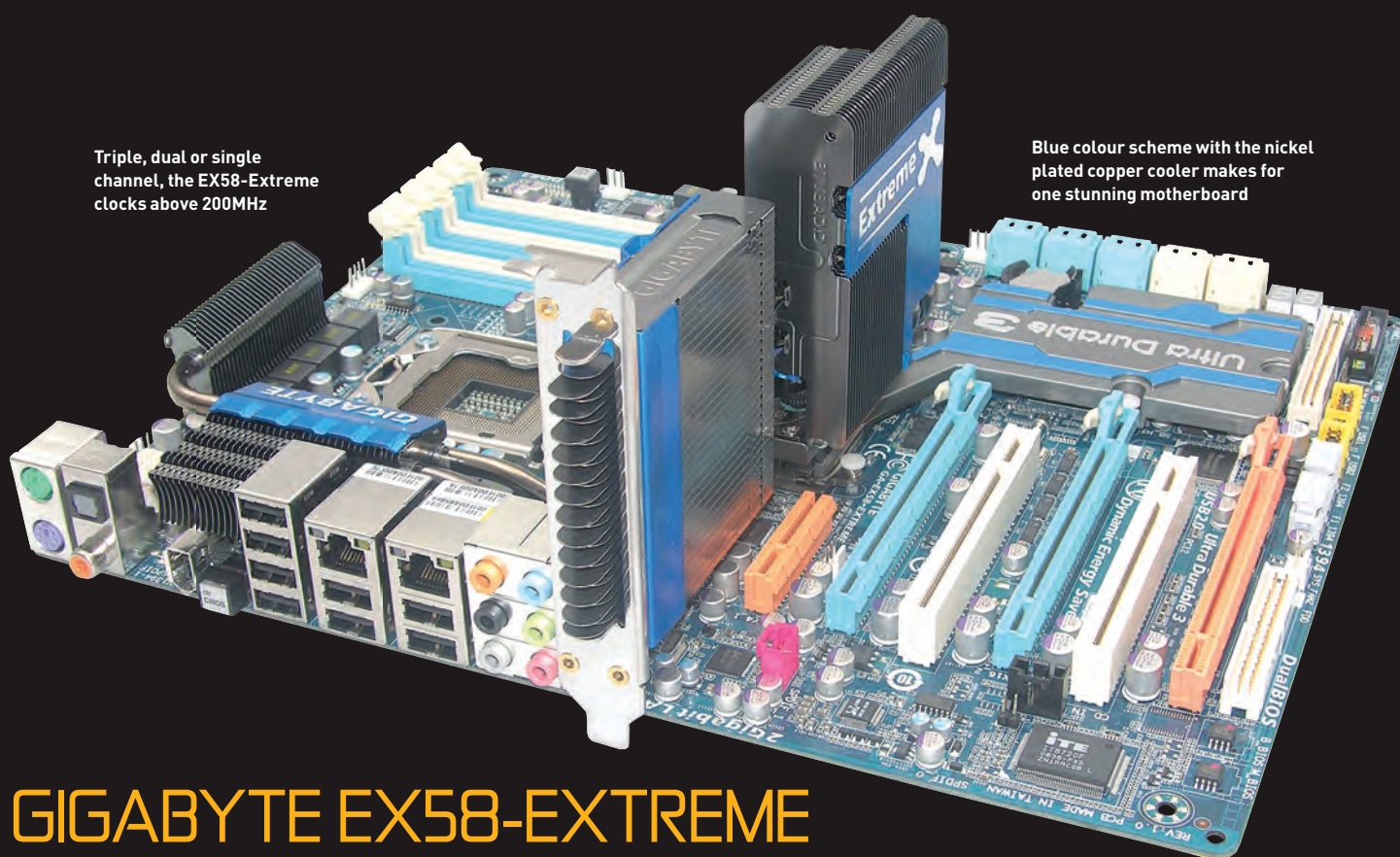
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Triple, dual or single channel, the EX58-Extreme clocks above 200MHz

Blue colour scheme with the nickel plated copper cooler makes for one stunning motherboard



## GIGABYTE EX58-EXTREME

**S**INCE THE LAST GIGABYTE extreme motherboard we reviewed, GIGABYTE has not only introduced an Ultra Durable 3 series, but has also introduced motherboards based on Intel's new X58 chipset, mainly the EX58-Extreme which we have here and the EX58-UD5 board for those on a slightly lower budget. The Extreme, as always, tops the enthusiast range. If history is anything to go by, there should be other variants introduced at a later stage, including the DQ6 version for gamers, but as it stands only two versions are available at present.

The EX58-Extreme we have here is a board tailor-made for overclocking above all else. It is indeed one special motherboard. Not only did this motherboard claim the world record for 3DMark Vantage courtesy of Xtremesystem's owner and veteran overclocker FUGGER, yours truly managed to claim a new 3DMark Vantage record locally, and third place (at the time of writing) in the world rankings with the same motherboard.

While Intel's Nehalem CPU tweaking is still in its infancy as far as the enthusiast community is concerned, GIGABYTE seems to have managed to make its board stand out by bringing in the Ultra Durable 3 technology into the new platform. Since the new boards from the company were doing so well, we did not expect any different from the EX58-Extreme, and indeed it lived up to our expectations. While the only other motherboard we may have tested based on the X58 platform isn't directly competing with this board, it served as an indication of what could be expected from motherboards based on the chipset. We were able to achieve a 215MHz BCLK frequency on the motherboard, but it was far from stable in any 3D Benchmark. The clock had to be lowered to 160MHz before it would complete a single 3DMark06 run. On the

EX58-Extreme, however, we were able to do multiple runs of 3DMark06 at 200MHz. Even more could be achieved from this board, but due to time constraints we were not able to do any further testing.

The most impressive part of the overclock was that it was achieved in a triple-channel memory configuration compared to the dual-channel setup on the previous X58 motherboard. Given that the architecture is new and so are the motherboards and compatible CPUs, the overclock seems to be in line with what the old 975 chipset was capable of when the Intel Core 2 CPU was released in 2006.

Where clock efficiency is concerned, there are so many variables to consider when dealing with the EX58-Extreme that one could literally write pages upon pages on the most optimal configuration for single, dual and triple channel setups. With the MCH located in the CPU in the i7, it's gotten even more complicated when it comes to tweaking the system. The BIOS options on the EX58-Extreme alone are enough to scare even the most experienced overclockers but, surprisingly enough, overclocking the motherboard is simple enough when using the most basic settings.

Where features are concerned, there really isn't anything missing from this motherboard; from three-Way SLI support, four-way CrossFire support, and everything in between, the EX58-Extreme has it covered. POST LED, power, reset and CMOS clear functionality on the motherboard itself and, of course, Dual BIOS support, which is a must-have for any motherboard catering for enthusiasts.

Aesthetically, again the motherboard is impressive. The new colour scheme introduced with the Ultra Durable 3 P45 based motherboards is present here as well, but manages to make even more of an impression, and could very well be the best looking

### STUFF OF DREAMS

	Champion: ASUS RAMPAGE EXTREME	Challenger: GIGABYTE EX58-Extreme
Ports		X
Speeds Supported		X
Build Quality	X	
Extras		X
Verdict		X

**NAG**  
HARDWARE



**NAG**  
DREAM MACHINE



motherboard to ever come from GIGABYTE.

The pricing is steep, as one would expect, but right now there aren't any X58 motherboards on the market that can claim to be better than the GIGABYTE offering. The EX58-Extreme is a definite winner and solidly deserves its place as our dream machine motherboard. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

### SPECS

<b>CHIPSET</b>	Intel X58
<b>MEMORY BANKS</b>	6 x DDR3 184-pin (6 x 2GB Maximum)
<b>CPU SUPPORT</b>	Intel Core i7, i7 Extreme
<b>SLOTS</b>	3 x PCI-E 16x, 1 x PCI-E 4x, 2 x PCI 2.2
<b>CONNECTORS</b>	SATA 3Gb/sec, 8 x USB2.0, 2 x Gigabit Ethernet, FireWire

### SCORE





The microphone is attached in a clever manner – it connects directly via a standard 3.5mm stereo jack. As well as meaning that it is easily detached, it also means that you can connect a separate stand-up mike, or the like, instead, if you prefer



## TRITON AX51 AUDIO XTREME 5.1 HEADSET

**T**HERE ARE GOOD IDEAS out there, and there are bad ideas. This particular unit is definitely a good idea. And it's even almost good in its implementation. Surround sound is becoming increasingly important for gaming, as positional audio helps players orient themselves within the game environment. Surround-sound headphones have always been a somewhat marginal affair, the reason being that, while it's all good to place speaker drivers in the correct relative positions, we rely mostly on small turnings of the head to perceive the directionality of a sound source. Therefore, any surround sound headphones, whether they make use of positional virtualisation, or actual positioned speakers, are destined to fall short of their goal.

This model is no different in this regard. At least, however, these headphones are very comfortable to wear – the ear-cups are large enough that even the biggest ears will be fully covered, and the head-rail is generously padded. There is a swing-down boom mike on the left side, which can be detached if not desired. Unfortunately, and probably because of the focus on the intended surround sound (a 5.1-channel implementation), these headphones do not make for a very private listening experience – even at a moderate audio volume, everyone near you will be able to hear exactly what you're hearing. Another down-side is the poor bass frequency response – while overall sound clarity is fairly good, it lacks the bass frequencies, even with the "Sub" turned up, so those big explosions lose considerable impact.

The AX51 scores well in terms of aesthetics – their aspect is similar to what you might expect from a set of expensive studio headphones. The in-line control box is pretty good. It lights up an appealing electric blue, and offers independent controls for "Sub", "Centre", "Surround", and "Front", as well as the ability to mute the microphone. The cable is also suitably long, with plenty spare should you want to use it with something other than your PC. Power provision, on the other hand, could have been handled better. Because of the in-line amplifier, a power source is required, which is understandable. However, whereas at least one other similar model I have seen allowed power to be drawn from a USB port, the AX51 can only accept power from an AC adapter, which is less than ideal in any situation, and all the more so at a LAN. All in all, this unit is considerably overpriced for what it offers. **NAG**

Alex Jelagin

### FEATURES

Individual Front, Centre, Rear and Sub controls

Master volume and mute controls

Detachable microphone

Cable length: 2.5m

### SCORE



hardware

RRP → R1,145 | Supplier → Mobile G | Website → [www.mobileg.co.za](http://www.mobileg.co.za) | Brand → Triton

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## IKONIK VULCAN 1200 WATT PSU

**I**F YOU'RE NOT FAMILIAR with IKONIK, the Vulcan 1200 Watt PSU is probably the best introduction to the company you could ever have, second only to being introduced via its RA-X10 SIM case. The company is relatively new, but is already making a name for itself by providing very high quality products with uncompromising build quality and performance.

This may sound like empty marketing talk, but in the case of the VULCAN 1200 Watt PSU the build quality is really something worth taking the time to look into. The PSU is not the best looking PSU you will find on the market, it's not even in contention for that award. While it is not displeasing by any stretch of the imagination, it is basic in its matt black finish with the large IKONIK branding on the side. While the fan does glow blue while in use, it is not going to turn heads.

No, the VULCAN 1200WATT PSU is not about looks first before anything else. No, it's about performance and in this regard it delivers, in fact it delivers better than any other PSU we have ever had the pleasure of testing. The brilliance is in the small touches, and obviously the power distribution and delivery, more than in any one single aspect.

The front of the PSU has a small LED switch which allows you to turn off the BLUE LED when the PSU is powered, particularly useful for those who may not have a blue themed lighting scheme, or those who just don't want any light emitting from their cases. A small feature, but one we wish would be on every supply. The base of the unit houses a 14cm ball-bearing fan that moves a healthy amount of air through the unit but produces very little noise. The fan, as with other PSUs,

serves to exhaust hot air in the case which improves temperatures in the entire case.

The main ATX connector is attached to the PSU and cannot be removed, which some may frown upon. However, the ability to remove the main ATX connector is more gimmicky than functional and as such it's not present on the Vulcan as the unit is based on functionality first before anything else. The main outlet for cabling is well thought out on the Vulcan, as it has two PCI-E 2.0 8-pin connectors coming off the main unit, two 8-pin 12V connectors for dual socket server motherboards, and obviously the main 24-pin ATX connector. This configuration is very useful in that it limits cable clutter which is usually only made worse by most cable management systems, as one ends up plugging in almost all the optional leads.

The PCI-E 2.0 connectors are clearly marked and colour coded on the unit. They are also located in the same side, which allows one to connect the leads even in poor light conditions. However, all the abovementioned functionality is not as important as the power the unit is able to deliver. This is particularly important when dealing with the 12V+ rails, of which there are four. We may frown on multiple rail configurations, but the Vulcan is not a 6-rail unit with disappointing 18A on each line; no, this unit offers 38A on two of the rails and 22A on the other two for a combined 120A on the 12V+ line. This is the most powerful PSU we have ever reviewed here at NAG. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, the unit was not locally available, but by the time you read this they should be close to availability. If you are looking for a powerful unit that will power anything from a QuadFX to an overclocked Skull

### STUFF OF DREAMS

	Champion: Silverstone Strider 1000 Watt	Challenger: IKONIK VULCAN 1200 Watt
Power		X
Rails		X
Extras		X
Verdict		X

**NAG**  
HARDWARE



**NAG**  
DREAM  
MACHINE



Trail system, this is the PSU you will need and want.

You'll be hard pressed to find anything better locally or otherwise without paying almost twice as much, and even then, the PSU you may receive is unlikely to be better than this one. The VULCAN 1200WATT PSU is easily the best PSU we have ever seen. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

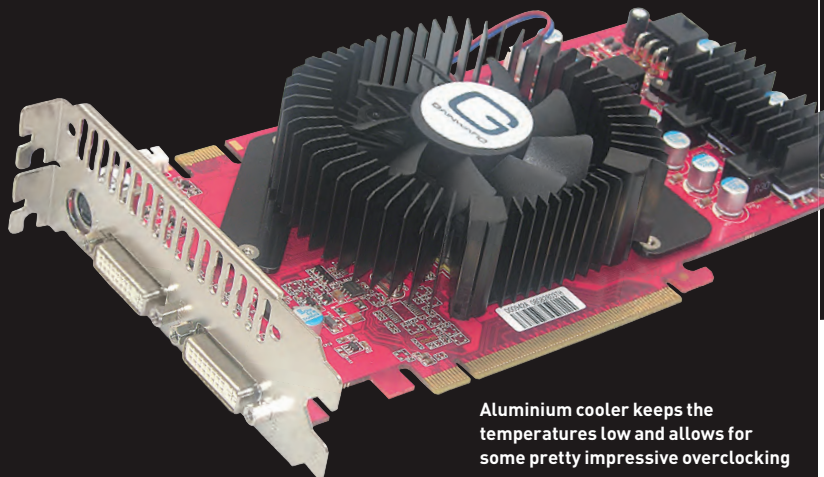
### SPECS

TOTAL POWER	1,200 Watts
12V RAILS	2 x 22A; 2 x 38A
EFFICIENCY	82%, 984W continuous
FEATURES	Quad-CrossFire, Quad SLI support, 3-way SLI, ATX 2.2, EPS 12V

### SCORE







Aluminium cooler keeps the temperatures low and allows for some pretty impressive overclocking

## GAINWARD 9800GT 512MB

**N**VIDIA, in light of stiff competition from ATI, have introduced a new GPU to compete in the low to mid market. NVIDIA's pricing on these new parts is so aggressive that it has completely opened up the VGA market for buyers. In the perfect world this would be just grand, however this is not the perfect world, and the VGA market has never been perfect since its inception. With the G92 last year, NVIDIA managed to produce a stellar GPU that impressed everyone with its great performance, compact size and most of all, incredible pricing.

The 8800GT seemed like a dream come true, especially considering that the only GPU to emerge from NVIDIA since 2006 up until that time was the hideously expensive GEFORCE 8800 ULTRA. With the G92 we had a redesigned core, with several improvements to cycle efficiency, lowered costs and seemingly lower temperatures. In some situations the 8800GT was able to outpace the 8800 ULTRA and that was a blessing at the time. There was literally not enough supply of the cards as they were being bought by everyone who had ever wanted high end graphics card power at the sub \$199 price tag. There was nothing to fault the GPU on other than the cooler, that being a little inadequate, at least in the reference models.

Why then, you may ask, are we covering the 8800GT when we are clearly dealing with the 9800GT? Well, the answer is pretty simple: the 9800GT is an 8800GT re-released. The PCB may be different, the SKU may be different, but the GPU, the specifications and everything else is the same. In fact the GPU itself is written G92, which so happens to be what the 8800GT GPU was called. More than that though, the 9800GT also contains 112 stream processors much like the 8800GT. NVIDIA has literally changed nothing in the core... The only difference here is that the 9800GT is cheaper to manufacture now than the 8800GT was at the time, so the GPU now falls in a different price bracket than it did before.

In this market the 9800GT is competing with the Radeon 4830 graphics card, which is a potent card in itself, but because it does not feature the 800 stream processors of the 4850 and higher models,

but 640 stream processors, it is slower than the other 4800 series cards. Given that the Radeon HD3870 was only 10-20% slower than the 8800GT, the 4830 is easily faster than the 9800GT in most tests as it has almost twice the power of the 3870. The question may be why would one buy the 9800GT? Hardware-accelerated physics is a possible answer, but not a realistic one, as there just isn't enough raw power left over to process physics on the graphic card while pumping complex pixels on the screen.

The other possible answer, and probably the most relevant one, is that the 9800GT is cheap and surprisingly enough overlocks very well. It is unlikely that the process has been specifically tweaked to produce better G92 cores at TSMC; however, as with all processes as they mature, better frequencies and yields tend to be the order of the day. To this end, the 9800GT, and in particular the Gainward sample, clocks pretty well, clocking better than the average 8800GT from last year. At higher clock speeds the 9800GT does present incredible value but one can't help but feel that a 9800GTX or 4850 would be the better buy...

Having said that, should you be on a tight budget but are in need of an upgrade from that ailing 3850 or even worse an 8600GT, this just may be the card you are looking for. Especially since Gainward has sweetened the deal with an advanced copy of 3DMark Vantage. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

### SPECS

CORE	G92 (600MHz)
PROCESS	754 million gates (65nm TSMC)
MEMORY	256-bit GDDR3 (1.8GHz 1.2ns)
ROP	16
STREAM	112

### SCORE



hardware

RRP → R2,299 | Supplier → Syntech SA | Website → [www.gainward.net](http://www.gainward.net) | Brand → Gainward

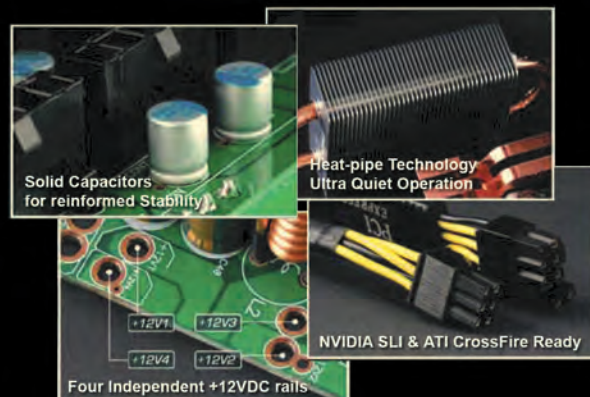
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# GIGABYTE ODIN PRO 1200WATT

RRP→ TBA | Supplier→ Rectron  
Website→ [www.rectron.co.za](http://www.rectron.co.za)  
Brand→ GIGABYTE

**YOU MAY ALREADY BE** familiar with the Odin GT 800W power supply and what it's capable of. It's a great unit, quiet and possibly amongst the best sub-1KW power supplies on the market. The Odin Pro, however, is a step above that. In fact it's exactly 400W more powerful than the GT unit.

The PSUs look virtually identical apart from the fact that the Odin Pro is longer, but styling-wise they are exactly the same. The blue 14cm fan gives off a nice glow that looks good through the honeycomb grill, while the matt-black finish rounds up the look. It's never going to be the main attraction of any system; rather, it will complement just about every high-end machine it is used in.

The Odin Pro does not provide a single 12V+ rail, but has four dedicated ones with two delivering an impressive 36A each, and the remaining two giving out 20A each for a total of 99A, enough to power almost any gaming or enthusiast machine. The cable management uses colour-coded plugs and



long sleeved cabling, which makes it a great fit for the very large cases or where the power supply is located further away from the motherboard than normal.

When tested, the Odin Pro was more than capable of powering a 4-Way Crossfire system, even with a QX9770 drawing in excess of 450W at 5.5GHz. The Odin Pro kept going without a single shutdown. GIGABYTE has basically taken all the best parts about the Odin GT unit and brought them over to the 1.2kW Odin Pro. Quad-SLI support, an 80 PLUS rating and just about every power connector you will ever need is included with the Odin Pro 1,200W unit. GIGABYTE has produced an excellent unit with the Odin Pro 1200 that is sure to power any hardware you use it with and with some power to spare. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

## SPECS

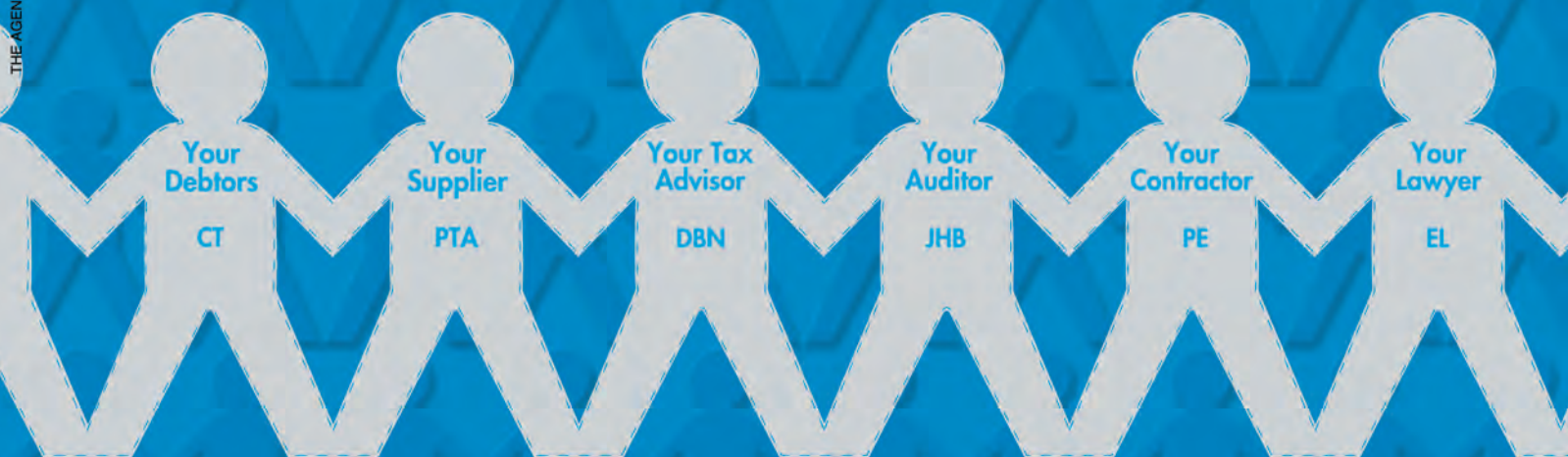
<b>TOTAL POWER</b>	1,200 Watts
<b>12V RAILS</b>	2 x 20A, 2 x 36A
<b>EFFICIENCY</b>	80% continuous (960 Watts)
<b>FEATURES</b>	Quad Crossfire, Quad-SLI support, ATX 2.2

## SCORE



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# GIGABYTE GV-487X2- 2GH

RRP→ TBA | Supplier→ Rectron  
Website→ [www.rectron.co.za](http://www.rectron.co.za)  
Brand→ GIGABYTE

**T**HERE CAN BE NO doubt that 2008 belonged to ATI where graphics cards are concerned. Not only did they go from being a distant 2<sup>nd</sup> to NVIDIA to arguably being number 1, they managed to secure the best value for money graphics cards on the market, and the fastest single graphics card courtesy of the 4870X2.

The 4800 series was impressive upon launch, but with each driver update, the products keep getting better, in particular the 4870X2. So when we received the GIGABYTE 4870X2 card, Catalyst 8.121 drivers were out and performance was nothing short of spectacular. The 4870X2 outpaced the GTX280 in every single benchmark and game we tried it on, and sometimes the margin was so big the 4870X2 could run a higher resolution and still outpace the GTX280.

Indeed it is a dual-GPU solution, but the pricing makes it a direct competitor to the GTX280 and as such, it is by far the better card where performance is concerned. The GIGABYTE 4870X2 is, as with all 4870X2

cards, packaged with an HDMI-DVI adapter, power adapters, a driver CD, manual and a TV-Out cable. A relatively standard package as with many 4870X2 cards, and some may say it could have been improved with a game. However, bundled games tend to get old very quickly and are usually sub-standard titles anyway, so GIGABYTE gets no points deducted for the lack of any game in the package.

Overclocking performance was as one would have expected; the memory overclocking was a bit low topping out at 950MHz, but the core was relatively good with a stable 860MHz on the reference cooler. The default fan profile was better than many of the other 4870X2 cards, but that was partly due to the Catalyst drivers which improve the thermals of the card when compared to previous driver releases.

The GIGABYTE 4870X2 is exactly what you would expect, a very fast VGA card, stable but also a tad too warm, as with all other

Fan profile may not be the best, but is better than the majority of 4870X2 cards

## SPECS

CORE	R700 (700MHz) X2
PROCESS	965 million gates (55nm low-k TSMC) X2
MEMORY	512-bit GDDR5 (3.6GHz)
ROP	32
SHADERS	800 (160 x 5-way SIMD) x 2
API SUPPORT	OpenGL 3.0, DirectX 10.1

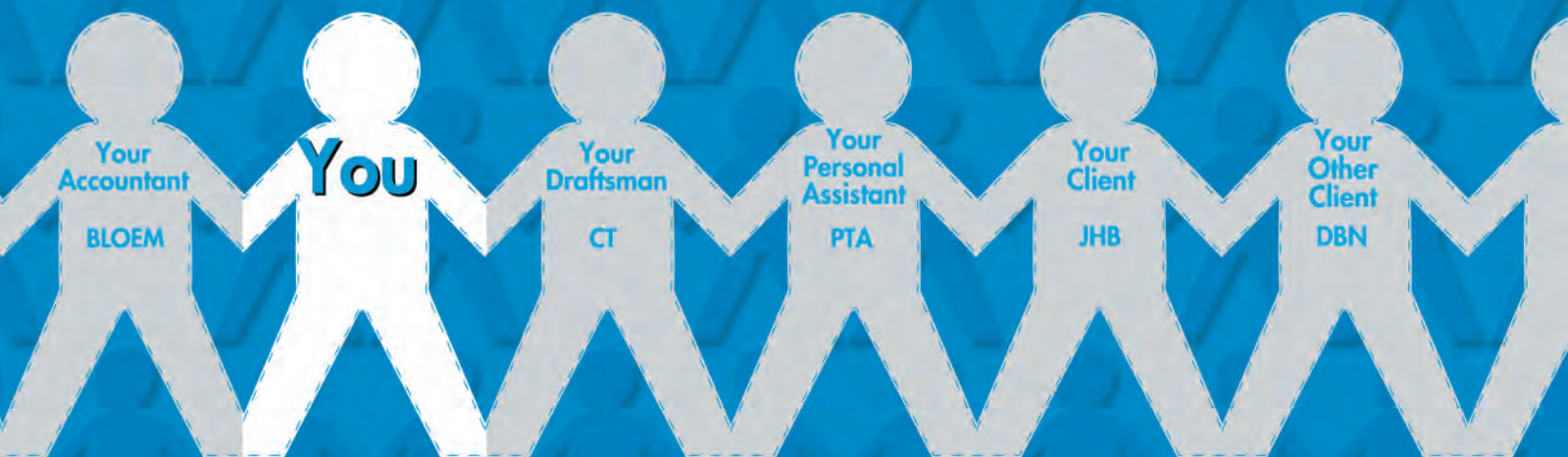
## SCORE



4870X2 cards. If you want a 4870X2 and don't know where to begin, the GIGABYTE R487X2-2GH would be a good place to start. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

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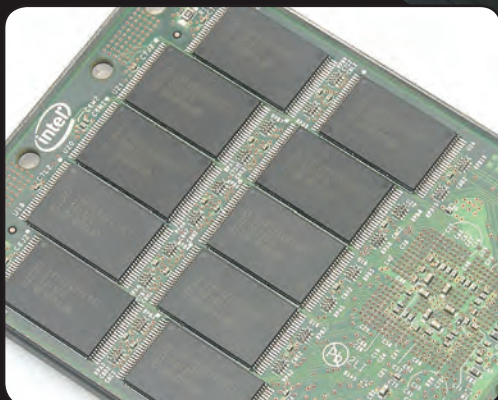
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sides of the PCB

## INTEL X25-M SOLID STATE DRIVE (SSD)

**IT WOULD BE UNTRUE** to say that Intel's X25-M SSD was a surprise when released, but we can say it was unexpected. We had previously heard of solid state drives from the likes of OCZ, Samsung and other memory vendors, but we were not expecting Intel to release a drive, especially not the fastest drive out of all of them.

The Intel X25-M SSD is small by today's standards, with only 80GB (74GB formatted) of storage and may not be suitable for a number of people who tend to install many applications and games which would easily use up the entire 80GB. However, the X25 isn't geared for mass storage, but performance where one would install the operating system, set a swap file, or where everyday performance-sensitive applications would be stored. One would not keep videos, music or any other media on this drive as that would be wasteful, since such media is not as sensitive to drive performance as actual applications.

The Intel X25-M SSD, as with all NAND-based storage, offers several advantages over traditional electromagnetic storage devices. Solid state drives are noise free, cooler, significantly faster, more robust, easier to manufacture, and take up less space than normal drives. With that said, solid state drives are horrifically expensive, capacities are limited but, most importantly, the average life-span of any SSD is lower than that of a traditional drive.

You may be wondering what is so different about the Intel drive that makes it

stand head and shoulders above the rest, and why it commands such a price tag. Well, it's not a simple answer, but basically Intel has managed to make MLC (Multi Level Flash) NAND memory as fast as traditional SLC (Single Level Flash) NAND memory. Intel has done this by reducing the write amplification factor significantly, which is typically anything from 20x to 40x, to 1.1x. Write amplification is similar to how a traditional drive writes any piece of information on to the platter. Depending on file system and allocation size, writing a 10kb file to the hard drive takes up typically two 8KB or three 4KB blocks. So that same 10KB file ends up taking up anything between 12KB and 16KB of actual drive space. On SSDs this has a negative effect on performance as, when writing to any block, the system needs to first read 128KB, then write 128k back again with the modified 10KB of data. This causes the massive write overhead associated with SSDs. Intel has not only remedied this but has managed to increase drive lifespan as a result, which should re-assure those worried about losing sensitive data prematurely due to failing NAND cells.

After all the technology however, what most people will want to know is how the drive performs. In this regard, there is not a single drive you can buy today that will be faster than the Intel X25-M SSD. To give you some reference, the discontinued GIGABYTE I-RAM, which made use of DDR 400MHz modules to make a drive out of



RAM, is not only slower than the Intel SSD, it's about half the speed. The Intel drive is so fast that it manages to put a significant distance performance-wise between itself and the WD VELOCIRAPTOR, which is without a doubt, the fastest magnetic drive available on the market.

With the X25, not only did all the benchmarks load almost instantly, games that usually have a long loading period such as CRYISIS are ready to play almost immediately. However, more than the load times, it is in the drive reading and writing during gameplay that is impressive. While disk thrashing is never a good thing, when it does have to happen, you would rather have it on the X25-M than on any other drive. The Intel X25-M SSD is simply the fastest drive we have ever tested by a significant margin. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

### SPECS

<b>CAPACITY</b>	80GB (74GB formatted)
<b>INTERFACE</b>	SATA 3Gb/sec
<b>CACHE</b>	None

### SCORE







## BUFFALO WI-FI GAMER'S ACCESS POINT

**I'M A BIG FAN** of specialised hardware.

It pretty much always works better than a general-purpose device of similar functionality, although the price premium for this convenience can be too high at times.

This Buffalo Wi-Fi Gaming AP, however, is perhaps a little too specialised. It's basically a WLAN link to your DSL-connected router for devices which support AOSS (AirStation OneTouch Secure System), an automated method of establishing secure wireless connections without confusing technology getting in your way.

However, only four gaming devices actually support AOSS: the Nintendo DS, the Wii, the PS3, and the PSP. We tested with a Wii unit, and it's certainly a breeze to set up. A couple of options in the Wii system console, and a single button on the Buffalo router itself, and just like that your console has access to the Internet via an encrypted wireless connection.

Of course, WLAN security can be frustrating at times, but it isn't that hard these days to manually configure a secure environment, although as I said this can be temperamental. And yes, the Buffalo does eliminate that hassle entirely, and our Wii test unit had an impressively stable WLAN connection as an AOSS-configured device.

With even more AOSS consoles to hook up, perhaps a PSP or two and a couple of PS3s to boot, the ease of implementing a secure WLAN environment for each one is certainly appealing. And fortunately for those of us without multiple gaming consoles in our environment, you can also load a

Buffalo client tool onto your laptop enabling a similarly hassle-free one-touch setup for your conventional home-office network.

This Buffalo unit does also function as a regular 802.11g wireless AP, manageable via a Web-based GUI as per usual, although it doesn't include a very nice interface, nor is the menu system particularly navigable or user-friendly.

On the plus side, there is an integrated LCD display on this compact, single RJ-45-equipped AP, surrounded by cursor keys which gives you some cool and potentially useful information about what your WLAN is doing. Hardly earth-shattering, perhaps, but it can be useful when troubleshooting your network.

Although the notebook client works well, the Buffalo product documentation nevertheless recommends the more mainstream AirConnect range for a regular PC/notebook environment. Although it's undeniably easy to use then, focussing purely on four gaming consoles is too limited an application, surely? Although, having said that, both Wii and PS3 continue to sell rather well globally, while PSPs must still represent a huge user base, so perhaps this extremely specialised WLAN security solution appeals to more of the overall market than I'm giving it credit for...

If you do have one or more of these four AOSS-capable products and WLAN security is a concern for you, but you're uncertain of how to actually set it up, this router will be the answer to your prayers. Otherwise, general-purpose APs are more affordable,

more flexible, and with just some tech work can be just as secure.

Still, the convenience of the Buffalo and associated AOSS routines must be worth some measure of price premium. In the end it's a solid product which provides easily secured WLAN connectivity to everyone regardless of technical background. Specialising certainly does have its operational benefits, as this device proves once again with sheer, elegant simplicity. **NAG**

**Russell Bennett**

### SPECS

<b>BUTTONS</b>	5 for controlling LCD, one for establishing AOSS
<b>LED INDICATORS</b>	Power, Security, Wireless 1 and 2, Diagnostics, and Internet status
<b>PORTS</b>	Power and Ethernet.
<b>PROTOCOLS</b>	802.11a/n, 802.11g
<b>THROUGHPUT</b>	Max 54Mbps
<b>SECURITY</b>	WPA configured by AOSS or manually

### SCORE





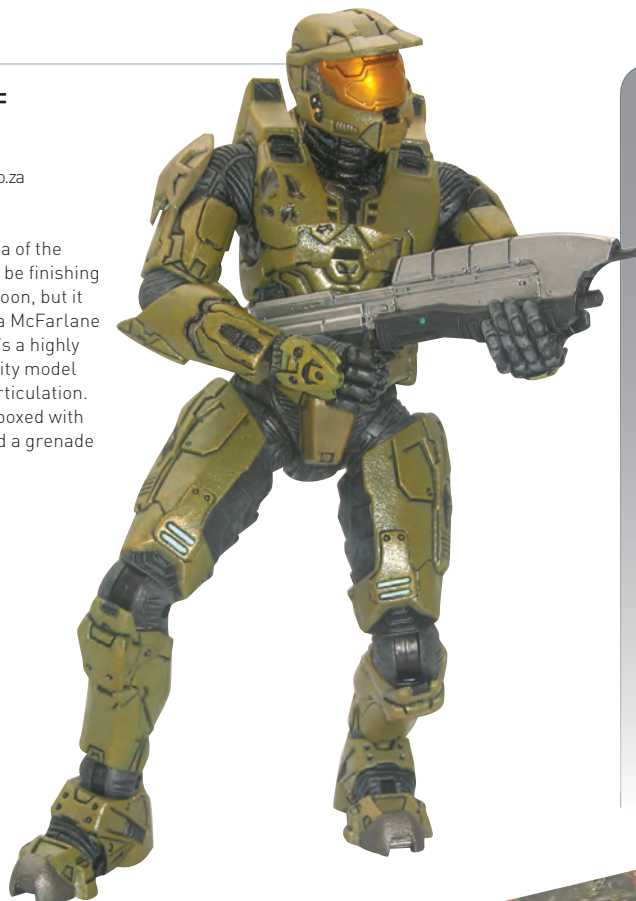
## MASTER CHIEF

**RRP:** R485

**Supplier:** www.awx.co.za

**Series:** Halo 3

This 12-inch replica of the man himself won't be finishing the fight anytime soon, but it sure is pretty. It's a McFarlane Toys product, so it's a highly detailed, high quality model with 26 points of articulation. The figure comes boxed with an assault rifle and a grenade for good measure.



## VENKMAN COSTUME T-SHIRT

**RRP:** R150

**Supplier:** www.awx.co.za

**Series:** Ghostbusters

It's a T-Shirt that looks like Venkman's jump suit from Ghostbusters. Wear it and pretend that you're cleaning up all the ectoplasm scattered around your home city. It also has gooey bits all over it that glow in the dark. It's a proven fact that having a shirt that glows in the dark automatically increases your awesome-o-meter by approximately 175.21%...



## RED SPARTAN - FIELD OF BATTLE ARTFX STATUE

**RRP:** R945

**Supplier:** www.awx.co.za

**Series:** Halo 3

Ever seen Red vs. Blue? Think of this statue as Sarge crouching in the dirt behind his dissipating Bubble Shield while Caboose throws rocks at him. Inside the box, you'll find a bunch of extra weapons with which to outfit the brave Spartan and a pair of creepy dismembered arms that we're guessing can replace the Spartan's default ones.



## THE ART OF THE VIDEOGAME

**RRP:** R610

**Supplier:** www.awx.co.za

This hardcover book by Josh Jenisch is a celebration of videogame artwork and it's filled with all kinds of spectacular images, walking you through the stages that the visuals in our games gradually go through, from concept art to the final product. It covers games from all genres, such as Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare, Hellgate: London and God of War.

## ALPHA, BETA AND SUPERNOVA

**RRP:** R170

**Supplier:** www.awx.co.za

**Series:** Galaxy Bunch [Virus]

There are nine of these little dudes. Collect them all to achieve superstar status.





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